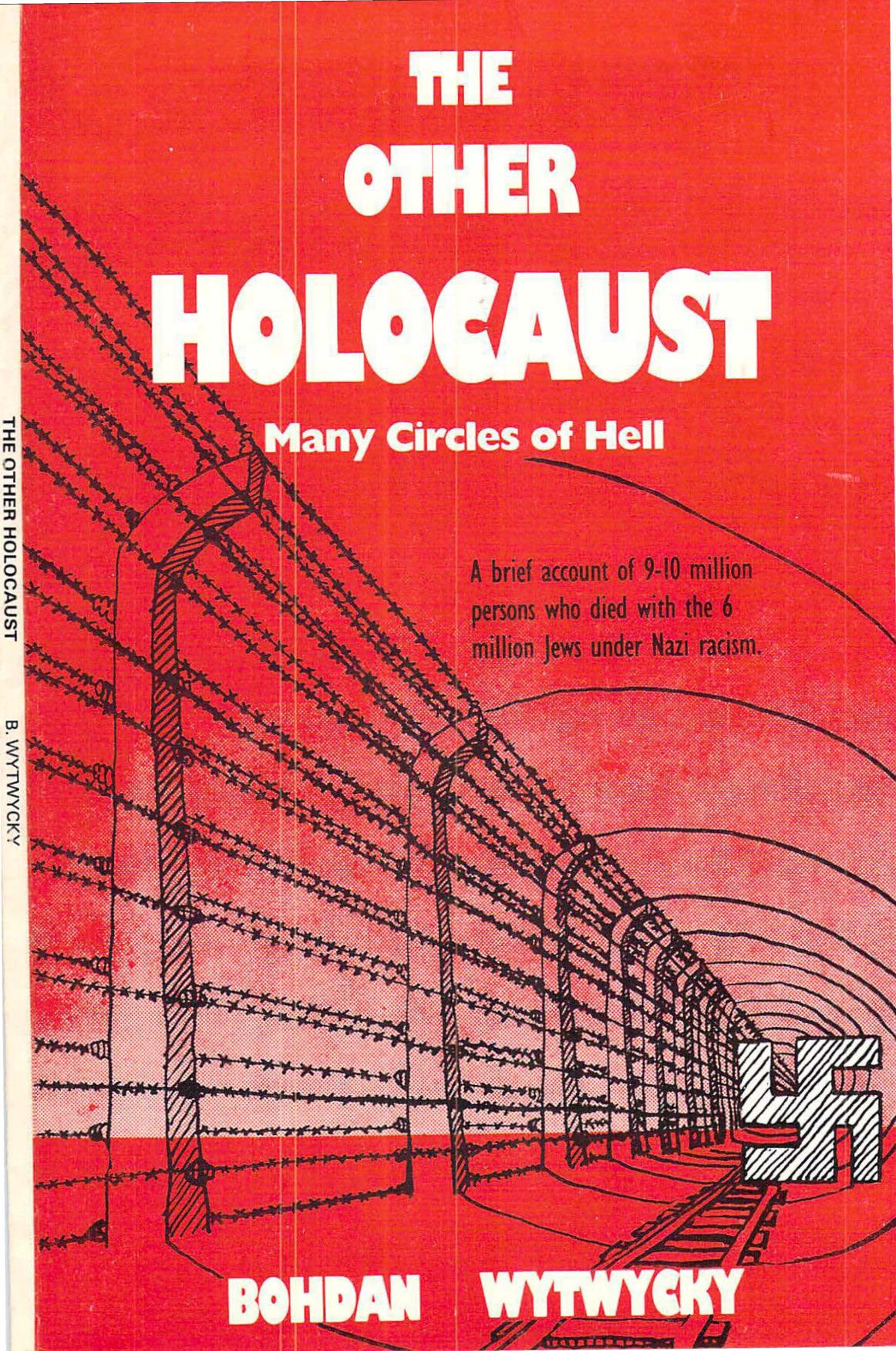


# THE OTHER HOLOCAUST

**Many Circles of Hell**



A brief account of 9-10 million persons who died with the 6 million Jews under Nazi racism.

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B. WYTWYCKY

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*A brief account  
of 9-10 million persons  
who died with the 6 million  
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by

**Bohdan Wytwycky**

A research project of  
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## FOREWORD

The years of Nazi rule in Europe saw the most incredible mass suffering in the lamentable history of man's inhumanity to man. The European continent was a place of carnage and unspeakable horror.

Now, some thirty-five years afterwards, we have still not managed to fully understand how human beings deliberately and coolly planned and carried out the burnings and the gassings resulting in the murder of millions. We facilely use words like ghetto, holocaust and genocide, applying them today to events — though gruesome — which bear only a slight relationship to the unique intensity and ferocity of the crimes of the Nazis and their collaborators.

In reading accounts, like the one presented by Dr. Wytwycky, the mind numbs and only gradually becomes accustomed to stupendous figures like six million. We have to concentrate our attention to realize that these are not just words on a page. It means that the equivalent of every man, woman, and child in New York City — twice over — died. Their death was not by plague or pestilence — but at the hands of other people who listened to Bach and read poetry in the evening after doing their grisly work of throwing babies into gas ovens. The victims were people like ourselves, our mothers, our children, or our aunts and uncles. The bitter question: Why? can never be adequately answered. The stories describing the holocaust show us how fragile is the thin veneer of civility and humanity which covers over the seething evil in the human heart. It also tells of the unspeakable capacity of the human soul to suffer and to bear tribulation without losing dignity and hope. The human heart is evil above all things. We are also created in the image of God. We dare not ever forget this paradoxical nature of the human species. Otherwise we might perpetrate the ultimate desecration of the memory of those who suffered — allowing a repetition of the Nazi horror.

The Jews, above all others, were the victims. Though all Jews were victims — not all victims were Jews. The special suffering of the Jews was intensified by their isolation — only a very few helped them in their tribulation. What made Jewish suffering even more cruel was that even among the other victims of Nazi persecution there were those who helped the Germans stoke the fires of the crematoria.

Dr. Wytywycky has rendered a unique service by briefly chronicling the burden of horror which was borne by a whole variety of people during the Nazi period. The lash of persecution and murder was the lot of gypsies, prisoners of war, Russians, Slavs and many others. Hitler had unleashed a wave of inhumanity which cast its shadow over the entire continent. Had fate not been so kind to us here, it would have engulfed us as well.

There is a brotherhood of suffering. Dr. Wytywycky's work helps create that brotherhood. Jewish suffering is unique. However, we are all part of a strange and awesome fellowship whose symbols are the gas chamber, the crematorium, the bloody ravine of Babi Yar.

This should also create within us — the survivors — a brotherhood of responsibility. This responsibility calls us to special concern for the survivors; close bonds of friendship, and strenuous and sacrificial work to prevent any form of hatred.

Fate and human cruelty make us brothers. Memory and responsibility put us under a common command: Remember! Do not forget! Never again!

Seymour Siegel  
The Jewish Theological Seminary  
of America

## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

For several years I have been looking for a writer who could open up for further inquiry what is perhaps the most important unknown story of our century. This monograph marks the completion of that search. Bohdan Wytycky, by his philosophical training at Columbia and by the largeness of his humanistic spirit, was uniquely suited to the task. He accomplished it well.

Over the years I had often noted the public use of two figures, whose conjunction raised an important question. "Six million" was the number commonly assigned for the number of Jews who died without mercy in the Nazi holocaust. A much larger figure — "fourteen to sixteen million," or even "eighteen million" — was usually assigned to the full number of those who died in the Nazi holocaust. As I was growing up the word "holocaust" had usually been appropriated for the Jewish suffering. *But who, then, were the victims in "the other holocaust"?* These were not soldiers, or accidental civilian victims of the war, so it was said. These were civilians chosen for racial, religious, cultural, or political reasons for destruction along with the Jews. Why, then, did I know so little about their story? Why was it so hard to learn about? Why were there so few books?

I still do not know the answer to these questions. Jewish scholars have been magnificent in their fierce devotion to uncover every fact about the Jewish holocaust. Other scholars have done less well. Whatever the reasons, those of us who care about understanding the twentieth century — understanding human history in our time — have much ground to make up.

The first task was to assemble the most available resources and to alert a whole generation of scholars and readers to the fact that

there are questions urgently in need of answering. If so many millions died, they cannot be allowed to have died for nothing.

Even with the appearance of this narrative, questions remain. Bohdan Wytwycky shows that he is as aware of them as any. He performs an incalculable service by bringing together into English, for the first time, the sources with which one must begin. In future editions of this volume — or perhaps in a second study — we will be happy to include materials which readers may wish to call to our attention. Our aim was to lay the ground for further work.

There is the question of numbers. So many were killed so recklessly, with such criminal intent and such thoroughness, that for many no records were kept and no witnesses have survived. On the other hand, such vast mountains of material remain to be sifted that no single human being could acquaint himself with all of it. Scholarly cooperation is necessary. Estimates are inescapable. Dr. Wytwycky skillfully outlines the rationale for the various estimates he has encountered in the work of other scholars.

The important point to remember is that this question does not concern victims of the Nazi war machine in general. It concerns the number of civilians selected by official Nazi policy for destruction independently of acts of war.

Even despite the thorough scholarship applied to the millions of Jews killed under Nazi policies, debate about the most acceptable figure of Jewish victims continues. No perfect enumeration exists; no census; no total set of records. For the non-Jewish victims, far less scholarship has been applied. From a variety of common sense deductions, the numbers Dr. Wytwycky cites seem entirely plausible. They need to be submitted to searching debate. Our aim is to discover the exact truth, wherever it lies. Even if *per impossibile* the number were to be reduced by half, the number of victims, about five million, would stagger imagination. One may approach from the opposite direction: Suppose that the number of victims were five hundred thousand only. *Only!* To the best of our present knowledge, the number of victims in this “other holocaust” is nine to ten million.

There is also the difficult question of collaboration. This is a difficult question for every victimized group. Here is how Lucy Dawidowicz discusses the subject in her much-praised volume, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-45* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975):

The Jews had no Quislings, Lavals, or Vlasovs, no leaders who shared common goals and aspirations with the Germans. The accusation that some Jewish leaders “cooperated” or “collaborated” with the Germans arises out of distortions of the historical record. Cooperation and collaboration with the Germans were policies voluntarily undertaken by leaders of nations that retained all or part of their independence and autonomy. In the ghettos of Poland, where German rule was total, where Hans Frank reigned as king, where Himmler’s SS kept order, and where the German army operated the economy, Germany did not ask for or get either cooperation or collaboration. SS force and terror extracted compliance from the Jews and aimed to bring them to a state of unresisting submissiveness. Unlike Quisling, Laval, and Vlasov, no Jew — not even an underworld blackguard who sold information to the Gestapo — ever awaited German victory. No Jew ever hoped for a New Order in Europe. The officials of the Judenrate were coerced by German terror to submit and comply. To say that they “cooperated” or “collaborated” with the Germans is semantic confusion and historical misrepresentation. (p. 348).

These fair observations apply to other groups. Some members of some groups, however, seem to have been particularly anti-Semitic, or on other grounds especially willing to collaborate with the Nazis, at least at first. How many were so? Can one properly take account of all those individuals who did *not* “collaborate” with the Nazis (in that odd sense which, as Dawidowicz says, alone applies), but who positively placed themselves and their loved ones in fatal jeopardy to help others? Still, the story of those who did take up the Nazi purposes, did contribute to them, and did assist their horrible functioning is a grim and distasteful story. In order to understand the heart of man, that, too, is a story that must be told. Dr. Wytycky judged that it was too long and complex a story to be told in such a brief work as this, and I concur with his judgment. First, the general topic and the large scene must be brought to public attention. Then the many important further questions must be addressed, one by one.

A third question concerns the psychology of the Nazis themselves. How could they do what they did? What were they thinking? What were they feeling? As it happens, I visited Auschwitz and Birkenau for the first time while this monograph was in press. The visual experience was unforgettable. Death there was made to seem so ordinary, so highly organized, that it appears at Auschwitz as a technical problem. While at Auschwitz, I purchased a short volume containing three diaries I had never read before, one by the original Kommandant of Auschwitz, Karl Hoess, one by its infamous medical doctor, and one by a junior officer at the camp. The title of the volume, available in several languages, is *KL Auschwitz Seen by the SS, (Second Edition, Revised, Oswiecimiu: Panstwowe Muzeum, 1978)*. It should be read by every student of the heart of man.

This monograph, then, is only a beginning. There is yet much to do. The subject is of the highest importance for an understanding of our time. We hope that many of those who teach courses in the history of the holocaust will find this booklet a valuable addition to their researches.

Michael Novak  
January 9, 1980

### Acknowledgments

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the sponsor of this project, Michael Novak. Without his initial idea for it and guidance throughout, the project would not have come into being.

Mr. Edward Piszek, president of Mrs. Paul's Kitchens, generously made available a small grant to *The Novak Report*, which enabled me to do the necessary research. To him, too, my thanks.

I am also indebted to my father, Dr. Wasyl Wytwycky, and Mr. George Liber for their help with translations and advice on sources. Lastly, a special thanks to Mrs. Luba Prokop for the maps.

B.W.

MAPA.



Drawn by Luba Prokop

MAP B.





## PART I: INTRODUCTION

My aim in this booklet is to provide an overview of some of the little known aspects of the Nazi holocaust. Brothers and sisters in death and suffering to the 6 million Jews who were consumed by the Nazi conflagration, another 9 to 10 million persons — people whose great misfortune was to fall under the special category of undesirables in the Nazi racial taxonomy — were also destroyed.

In his classic medieval trilogy, *The Divine Comedy*, Dante managed to portray nine different "circles" of damnation. The Nazi hell, too, consisted of different circles into which victims were consigned and in which they suffered a variety of cruel fates. The Nazi hell differed from Dante's, of course, because its victims were innocents whose only "crime" was to belong to peoples whom Nazi racism had decreed to be unworthy of sharing in the Thousand Year Reich.

Those who were condemned to the most desperate circle in the Nazi hell were undeniably the Jews. They were slated for total annihilation as a people, and Hitler in fact managed to kill an estimated 65 to 70% of all European Jewry, including virtually all of the German and East European Jews. The circle neighboring that of the Jews was reserved for the Gypsies, who also were designated for complete extinction. However, the Germans' mania for exterminating the Gypsies did not quite achieve the same pitch of madness as that directed toward the Jews. Also, the nomadic lifestyle of the Gypsies made them more difficult to locate. Nevertheless, the Nazis managed to kill somewhere between a fourth and a third of all the Gypsies in Europe. And in those areas of Europe where the Nazis held complete direct control for an extended period of time, as in Germany, in various occupied Eastern European countries, and in some small countries such as Holland and Belgium, the Nazi elimination of Gypsies ranged between 70% and totality.

The next circle in the Nazi inferno was set aside for the Slavs; specifically, for the Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians and Russians. In the Nazi scheme of things, the Slavs were an inferior breed of people whose alleged historical destiny was to serve as slaves for the Germans in the new Aryan empire. Toward this end, the Nazis projected and made considerable progress in a plan to exterminate all the leading strata of the Slavic peoples. The Nazis set out to eliminate not only the leading intelligentsia but also the educated classes in general, the clergy, the aristocracy, the civic and political leadership and so on. Because the Polish, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Russian populations at large were considered to consist of inferior peoples, the Nazis exterminated or sent to concentration camps between 9 and 10 million of their people.

Still other circles in the Nazi underworld of mass death production and concentration camps were occupied by a wide variety of groups. In Auschwitz for example, over thirty different nationalities were represented. There were political prisoners of all stripes, including some 10,000 Spaniards who had fought against Franco in the Spanish Civil War and who had been residing in France when Hitler's invasion caught them there. Only about 500 survived the camps. Another circle was assigned to certain religious dissenters, among whom there were many Jehovah's Witnesses. The most privileged of prisoners included the Volksdeutsche who had somehow managed to run afoul of the Nazi regime, and the common German criminals. The Volksdeutsche were persons of at least partial German ancestry who had lived outside the boundaries of Germany or Austria prior to the outbreak of the war and who were considered by the Nazis to be vastly superior racially to the non-Germans among whom they lived.

If one were to try and summarize the principal differences and similarities between the plights of the two most numerous categories of people victimized by the Nazis, the Jews and the Slavs,\* the following sketch might emerge. We begin with the differences.

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\* Except when otherwise indicated, the term "Slav" will be used primarily to refer to the three Slavic peoples for whom the length, extent and character of Nazi occupation were most destructive: the Poles, the Ukrainians and Belorussians; but I also use the word, by extension, to cover Nazi barbarism in Czechoslovakia, Russia and the non-Slavic East European lands like the Baltic states.

Hitler's anti-Semitism, and the anti-Semitism of the Nazis as official policy, was an obsession. It was the Jew whom Hitler simultaneously feared and hated more than anyone else in the world, as was evident starting from his anti-Semitic ruminations in *Mein Kampf* and ending with his decision that "the war against the Jews" should at times take precedence even over the military struggle against the Allies. In a number of different cases, trains which were desperately needed to resupply German troops on the Eastern front were diverted for the purpose of transporting Jews to the gas chambers. This obsessiveness on the part of the Nazis towards the Jews was one of the chief reasons why the status of the Jews — among all of those people for whom Hitler had designed some special solution — possessed characteristics which were unique.

The second and related distinctive feature of the Jews' situation under the Nazis had to do with the character of the "solution" projected for them. Whereas the Slavs as a people were slated to suffer the decapitation of each nation's leadership and then the subjugation of others to slavery, the Jews were condemned to total and unequivocal annihilation. The Nazis' obsession with the Jews made the solution to the "Jewish question" a top priority, and a majority of European Jews were exterminated as a result of a sustained thoroughness not applied to the Nazis' killings of any other people.

Thirdly, there remains the grisly issue of technique. Though substantial numbers of Jews were killed in a variety of ways, in a variety of places and circumstances, it is nevertheless the case that a majority — perhaps 4.25 to 4.5 out of the total 6 million — among those who perished under the Nazis did so in the gas chambers and crematoria. In contradistinction, a majority of the 9 to 10 million Slavs who perished met their deaths outside of the gas chambers and crematoria. Although at least a million Slavs perished in the death camps like Auschwitz, most of the Slavs who died were shot to death in thousands of mass and individual executions, starved or worked to death. In this regard, the remark once made by the Nazi Governor General of occupied Poland, Dr. Hans Frank, is rather telling: ". . . if I wanted to put up posters for every seven Poles that have been shot, the Polish forests would not suffice to produce the paper for the announcements." (Dziewanowski, 1977: p. 270f) Thus, in addition to being the objects of a unique hatred and having

the mortal misfortune of being designated as a top priority for systematic annihilation, the Jews were set apart from the other categories of victims of the Nazi holocaust by virtue of the dominant mode of extermination applied to them.

What the various peoples, the Jews, Gypsies and Slavs, who suffered most under Nazi barbarism had in common was that they were all victims of a caste system introduced by the Nazis on the basis of a pseudo-scientific theoretical foundation. According to Nazi mythology — which, to everyone's horror, the Nazis regarded as legitimate political theory grounded in "science" and history — destiny had ordained that the Germans be the dominant and preeminent "race" on earth on the basis of an alleged intellectual, cultural and biological superiority. The rest of the Europeans were also considered to be superior beings and — though of course not viewed as being on a par with the Germans — were ranked roughly on the basis of geography and purported historical affiliations. Thus, the northern Europeans were thought of somewhat more highly than the southern Europeans. However, the Jews, Gypsies and Slavs were assigned to the bottom three castes. The Jews, as a people of non-European and "alien blood," were considered by Hitler and the Nazis as human vermin of which the Nazis were going to cleanse Europe. The Gypsies, also dangerous racially because they too were non-Europeans and therefore of alien blood, were alleged to be part of European society's "asocial" element of which it similarly needed to be rid. The Slavs, also purported to be non-Europeans, were depicted by the Nazis as "subhumans" and were condemned to either extinction or enslavement.

Although there were, to be sure, differences in degree, circumstances and intent on the part of the Nazis, in the suffering imposed upon Jews, Gypsies and Slavs, the effects of Nazi brutality have left an indelible mark on the collective memory of them all. For these "undesirables" were converted prematurely into skeletons: skeletons in the ovens; skeletons sharing collective graves in one or another ravine in eastern Europe; living skeletons liberated by the Allies from the concentration camps. Memories populated with skeletons die slowly.

The overview of Nazi atrocities which follows is not intended to be comprehensive. The list of instances of Nazi brutality is so long and touches so many different lands and peoples which suffered periods of Nazi occupation that several long volumes would be

required simply to list every Nazi brutality directed against a minimum of at least ten persons in any single instance. One study restricted to recording only those cases of atrocities directed at civilians in the Polish countryside, i.e., excluding those committed in the cities, which affected at least ten persons at a time *fills an entire volume* — Czeslaw Madajczyk's *Hitlerowski Terror Na Wsi Polskiej 1939-1945*. Thus, many aspects of Nazi brutality cannot even be touched upon here because of restrictions of space. For example, I will not be addressing myself at all to the terror campaigns directed against Czechoslovakia or the Baltic states.

Another aspect of the holocaust I cannot cover concerns the collaborators. Virtually everywhere that Nazi technique spread its reign of terror, there were natives in the occupied lands who — some voluntarily, in return for money or power, some involuntarily — aided and abetted the barbarities. Horrible as it is to say, some seized the opportunity of occupation to give vent to their own anti-Semitism and thereby helped the Nazis in the killing of Jews. Others used the opportunity to eliminate personal or political enemies by using borrowed authority to eliminate their own countrymen and women. An informative source for reports of individual instances of collaboration directed against Jews is Raul Hillberg's *The Destruction of European Jews*. Nevertheless, no thorough study has ever been made on the subject of those who collaborated with the Nazis\* in the different lands in the commission of crimes against civilians, and it is difficult to make even superficial yet accurate and supportable generalizations about the subject, in terms of what type of people collaborated, why and with what result. Second, in terms of numbers of people involved, the question of collaboration is simply dwarfed by the issue of the victims of the holocaust in each of the East European countries. And with or without collaborators, the Nazi program of death was efficient beyond imagination.

Finally, I employ the names of countries as they are presently constituted in terms of boundaries. That is, "Poland" should be understood to refer to the lands included in present-day Poland;

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\* An article which casts some light on certain aspects of the collaborationist issue is John Armstrong's "Collaborationism in World War II: The Integral Nationalist Variant in Eastern Europe." *Journal of Modern History* 40, no. 3 (September 1968): 396-410.

likewise, "Ukraine"\*\* should be understood to refer to the lands included in the present-day Ukrainian SSR, and so on. During World War II, the Germans reorganized political boundaries to suit their own purposes. The occupation zones encompassing Poland and Ukraine respectively, for example, were quite different from present-day boundaries. The occupation zone which was supposed to embrace Polish territory did not include huge chunks of western Poland which had been incorporated into the new Germany, but did include in its southeastern corner a good piece of western Ukraine. Similarly, the occupation zone Ukraine included territories which are part of present-day Belorussia, but did not include territories which were granted to Rumania ("Transnistria") or were incorporated into the boundaries of the General Government, the administrative entity comprising occupied Poland. Therefore, in this text references to Nazi atrocities in Poland or Ukraine signify Poland or Ukraine as presently constituted.

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\* Many Ukrainians deeply resent the employment of the article as in "the Ukraine," because it represents anachronistic English usage applied to Ukraine when it was a part of the Czarist Russian Empire and perceived as a region of Russia in the sense in which one speaks of "the steppes" or "the marshland." For example, one never refers to other countries as "the Poland" or "the Russia." The article will therefore be avoided.

## PART II: NAZI THEORIES OF RACISM AND IMPERIALISM

### Section 1: The Four Ideological Pillars of the Third Reich

Modern war alone makes whole populations suffer terribly, not least in those areas where battles are waged or hostile troops are billeted. Much of Eastern Europe was a huge battleground during the Second World War. However, the Nazi campaigns in Eastern Europe went far beyond ordinary modern war and occupation. Previously unimaginable numbers of helpless prisoners of war and equally helpless civilians were killed in routine fashion and far beyond the normal scope of warfare.

Nazi behavior cannot be accounted for as aberration or mere passion. It was the intended and expected outcome of policies which were deliberately chosen to have precisely the effect they did have. Furthermore, these policies were not incidental but were the desired outcome of an explicit theoretical foundation.

Scholars who have analyzed the ideational basis of the Third Reich discern four dogmas of Nazi ideology: *Lebensraum*, *Drang nach Osten*, racism and anti-Semitism. These four dogmas were already articulated in the early 1920s in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, a text which contains explicit justification for each of them. In addition, technical planning was later developed in detail for the extensive atrocities to be committed against civilian populations: the administration of terror upon millions was carefully designed.

Though well known, the role of anti-Semitism in the Nazi world view is brilliantly analyzed anew in Part I of Lucy Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews*. Before the facts, one can feel only horror. However, the three remaining dogmas which bear directly upon Nazi conduct toward the Slavs and Gypsies are less well known.

Hitler's announced goal for the Third Reich was the establishment of a German empire which would require colonies because of the high population density of Germany proper. The Nazis romanticized the virtues of rural life; hence, their long-range ideal for Germany was to make it possible for every German to be able to cul-

tivate his own estate. There was not nearly enough arable farmland in Germany to make this dream possible. Thus, it was obvious to Hitler that Germany needed *Lebensraum*, or living space.

Where was this living space to be sought? As Hitler had explained it in *Mein Kampf*, it was impossible to expand westward or southward, in directions already densely populated by other nations acknowledged by him to be genuinely European. As Germany's northern boundary is mostly circumscribed by sea, the only remaining direction for expansion was eastward. Vast stretches of land extended through the middle of Poland, through the endless fertile plains of Ukraine on into the broad expanse of European Russia. Most of this area is excellent for farming. Therefore, in Hitler's view, millions of agricultural colonists from the German motherland could find adequate "living space" there in which to live comfortably and cultivate the land. Hitler decided long before the outbreak of the war that it was Germany's destiny to secure this *Lebensraum* to the East; as a result, the *Drang nach Osten*, or "drive to the East," became inevitable.

There was one major impediment to this Nazi scheme. The Polish, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Russian lands in question were not barren of inhabitants. Much of the territory the Nazis coveted was as densely settled as any in western Europe; these were not virgin lands: more than two hundred million Slavs lived in the Nazi path.

The obstacle posed by the existence of the two hundred million Slavs in the territories to be colonized was not a moral obstacle for the Nazis. For the Nazis were able to claim land belonging to others on the basis of a caste system according to which the Germans were a superior race, with a God given and historical entitlement to the lands they needed for adequate "living space."

In the Nazi view, the racial inferiority of the Slavs reduced the problem of displacement from a moral to a practical one. The question at issue for them was technical: how best to dispose of the native populations. The plan devised for their disposal contained three strategies. One sizable portion of the population would be liquidated through a sustained policy of extermination. A second large portion would be reduced to the status of slaves and used as a supply of cheap labor for the colonists. The remaining third portion of the population would be driven eastward into Asia where it could do whatever it wanted.

The underpinning to this whole mad scheme was a profound racism. Given the pivotal role of this racism in rationalizing a barbaric technical plan, we must devote special attention to its roots, role and nature in order to gain a fuller appreciation of the character of the events which came to pass during the Nazi era.

## Section 2: The Slavs and Gypsies as Subhumans and Asocials

Nazi racism toward the Slavs and Gypsies had two general features. First, it pervaded the entire broad spectrum of Nazi practices with respect to its victims. Whether one examines the Nazis' treatment of civilian populations in the East, or the German military's murderous treatment of Soviet prisoners of war, or the discriminatory treatment of Gypsies and Slavs within concentration camps or the Nazis' brutal treatment of slave laborers brought from the East, it is apparent that the Gypsies and Slavs were the victims of a pervasive campaign of enslavement and extermination. The second feature of Nazi racism was that both in its intent and in its consequences it was lethal.

Like Hitler's anti-Semitism, his racism too found early expression in *Mein Kampf*. There he contemptuously refers to the alleged process of Slavization in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as "degeneration." The Austro-Hungarian Empire — as a citizen of which Hitler was born and in whose capital, Vienna, he lived as a young man — was until its collapse during the First World War a multi-national state which embraced parts or the whole of present-day Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, western Ukraine, Yugoslavia and Rumania. Later, Hitler wrote of his experience in Vienna in *Mein Kampf* thus:

I was repelled by the conglomeration of races which the capital showed me, repelled by this whole mixture of Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Ruthenians\*, Serbs, and Croats, and everywhere, the eternal mushroom of humanity — Jews and more Jews.

To me the giant city seemed the embodiment of racial desecration. (Hitler, 1943: p. 123).

It is therefore evident that Hitler's perceptions of non-Germanic peoples — perceptions which would later play such a crucial role in

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\* Ukrainians

determining the character of the Nazis' wartime policies — did not suddenly surface at the outset of the war. Indeed, the Nazis' self-serving propaganda during the occupation of Eastern Europe had already been neatly epitomized by a single statement in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*: "Slavs are a mass of born slaves."

The persecution of Europe's Gypsy population had had a long and unfortunate history on that continent, even before Hitler's time. However, as in the case of anti-Semitism, Nazi racism directed against the Gypsies was radically different from anything that had preceded it. That this was so is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that, as reported by Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon (1972), the same year that the Nazis came to power (1933), an SS study group came up with the following recommendation for what should one day be done with the Gypsies: they should be gathered up and loaded onto ships which would then be taken out to sea and sunk.

The Nazis' "racial scientists" maintained that the Gypsies were not Europeans (despite the fact that they had lived there for many long centuries), but were of foreign or "alien blood." They were therefore considered a menace to Europe's racial purity and candidates for elimination. Furthermore, the Gypsies were denounced by the Nazis on the grounds that they were a dangerous "asocial" element, that they were as a whole immoral, criminal, work-shy and ineducable, and thus contaminated their host environment.

During the years immediately preceding the war, expressions of German racism toward the Gypsies were undisguised, but signs of German racism toward the Slavs were muted. The reasons for this are not difficult to discern. Up until the invasion of Poland in 1939, Germany was carrying on full diplomatic relations with that country, and also with the Soviet Union. After the signing of the Nazi-Soviet treaty of 1939 and until the German invasion of the USSR in 1941, the relationship between Nazi Germany and the USSR could not, on the face of it, have been better. Hitler and Stalin regularly extolled each other's virtues, and Stalin was providing the Germans with huge amounts of grain and other supplies. So, during the years 1933-41, it would not have been appropriate for the Nazis to give vent to their designs upon the Slavs as a whole category of allegedly inferior peoples.

Between the years 1939-41, the Nazis limited the expression of their general racism toward the Slavs to a relentless assault upon

the Poles. Thus, it was during this period that Hitler declared: "Poles are especially born for low labor . . . There can be no question of improvement for them" (Shirer, 1960: p. 938); "The Poles are not Europeans but Asiatics who can be handled only with a knout" (Lukacs, 1953: p. 443); and, in a letter sent to Mussolini in 1940, "My administrators . . . would prefer to govern Negroes instead of Poles." (Lukacs, 1953: p. 774) Perhaps the most telling statement of the Nazis' categorical hatred and contempt for the Poles is reflected in a 1940 publication which elaborated the Nazi party's guidelines regarding the correct posture toward the subjugated Poles:

In the relation between the German and Polish peoples, the first law is that above the Polish magnate stands the German peasant; above the Polish intellectual the German laborer; that there is no common measure between Germans and Poles, as that would deprive the German of his status as master. (Republic of Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1942: p. 184)

All pretense on the part of the Nazis that their racism was directed solely at the Poles was shed with the invasion of the Soviet Union. A letter from an official in the German ministry overseeing the administration of the East reveals the real scope of the ultimate target:

The Slavs are to work for us. In-so-far as we don't need them, they may die. Therefore compulsory vaccination and German health services are superfluous . . . Education is dangerous. It is enough if they can count up to 100 . . . Every educated person is a future enemy. Religion we leave to them as a means of diversion. As for food they won't get any more than is absolutely necessary. We are the masters. We come first. (Shirer, 1960: p. 939)

The refrain "we are the masters" is found over and over again in the documents of countless Nazi officials and agencies. To cite but one more example: Erich Koch, the notorious Nazi commissar who ruled the Ukrainian occupation zone, reiterated in 1943 — in reference to the local Ukrainian population: "We are a master race,

which must remember that the lowliest German worker is racially and biologically a thousand times more valuable than the population here." (Shirer, 1960: p. 939)

From the propaganda standpoint, the essence of the Nazis' anti-Slav tirade was reached in 1942 with the appearance of the SS publication entitled *Untermensch* (*Subhuman*). This small volume, a fifty-some page booklet put out by SS chief Himmler, contained some of the most primitive, vicious and virulent racism ever given expression in print. The Slavs inhabiting the Soviet Union were described as being the historical embodiment of everything most barbarous, savage, monstrous, depraved and murderous ever seen on earth. *Untermensch* was distributed by the millions across Hitler's empire, and it served simultaneously to reflect long held attitudes and to further legitimate existing policies of annihilation, enslavement and expulsion.

A highly enlightening first person account of the general character of the Nazi occupation of Ukraine — specifically Kiev and its environs — which captures the all-pervasiveness of the racism under discussion is A. Anatoli's (Kuznetsov) *Babi Yar*. In it we find the following anecdote:

When the tramcar drew up, the crowd scrambled in by the rear entrance while a German entered by the front. The tramcars were divided — the rear part was for the local population, and the front was for the Aryans. When I had read about the Negroes in books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Mister Twister* I never imagined I would one day have to ride in a tramcar in the same way.

The tram went past shops and restaurants with large bold signs posted up — UKRAINIANS NOT ADMITTED, GERMANS ONLY. (Anatoli, 1970: p. 226)

Thus, though not all were marked for immediate annihilation or enslavement, all were immediately inferior. Historically, countless Jews and Slavs had long looked upon Germany as representative of cultural, technological and administrative advancement and excellence, a nation of brilliant literature, music, philosophy and science. Ironically, it was on the marquee of the Kiev ballet theatre that Anatoli saw the sign — NO UKRAINIANS OR DOGS ADMITTED. Truly not an auspicious sign of cultural advancement.

Yet however bleak the period of Nazi conquest and occupation, the Slavs would have had to suffer even greater depredation had the Nazis won the war. This is made clear by the words of the Nazi Governor General of the occupied Polish zone, Dr. Hans Frank:

Once we have won the war, then for all I care, mincemeat can be made of the Poles and Ukrainians and all the others who run around here — it does not matter what happens. (Lukacs, 1953: p. 570)

Fortunately, that turn of events never came to pass.

## PART III: VICTIMS OF NAZI RACISM IN ACTION

### Section 1: The Gypsies

The first among the many victim peoples to be caught up in the web of what later became a whole empire of Nazi concentration and annihilation camps were the Gypsies. As early as 1936, some 400 Gypsies were taken from Bavaria and sent to Dachau. The same year Gypsies also began to be sent to Ravensbruck. Soon after special camps for the Gypsies of Germany and Austria were set up in Lackenback, Bruckhaufen, Leopoldskron and Hopfgarten. The pretext for these internments was the charge that Gypsies were *arbeitsscheue* (labor shy) and *asoziale* (asocial). Even earlier attempts by the Nazis to exercise some physical control over the Gypsies can be traced back as far as 1933 when, as reported by Kenrick and Puxon (1972), Gypsies began to be forced to live in special settlements.

The persecution of the Gypsy population in Europe predated the Nazi rise to power in 1933. There is nevertheless no comparison between the persecution suffered by the Gypsies before the coming of Hitler and that suffered after. For the Nazis began to single out the Gypsies as a people of *artfremdes Blut* (alien blood), a policy which would culminate in the practice of wholesale extermination. The Nazis added to the general public's vague feelings of mistrust and dislike of the Gypsies the racist view that Gypsies are hereditarily infected beings, of unworthy, primitive, alien blood, necessarily involved in asociality and criminality.

In 1937 the Nazis enacted "The Laws against Crime," under which completely innocent Gypsies were rounded up and sent to Buchenwald. These decrees devoted much attention to a category of persons defined as "asocial." A victim did not have to commit any crime at all to fall within the purview of these statutes; it was enough to be categorized as an asocial. After this law was passed and quite probably as a result of it, the police in each German

district received written instructions to arrest a minimum of 200 working-age men and to forward them to Buchenwald. Although both Gypsies and non-Gypsies were arrested, Gypsies were arrested by virtue of being considered asocial by definition.

The first law directed specifically and explicitly against the Gypsies was produced in 1938. The individual provisions of this law were listed under the title "Fight against the Gypsy Menace." The unmistakably racist bent of this law is exposed in its very first statement:

Experience gained in the fight against the Gypsy menace and the knowledge derived from race-biological research have shown that the proper method of attacking the Gypsy problem seems to be to treat it as a matter of race . . . .  
(Kenrick & Puxon, 1972: p. 73)

The purpose of the law was to find and identify all Gypsies on German and Austrian soil by forcing them to register with the police, who were ordered to keep a precise census. In addition, the police were ordered to report all persons who looked like Gypsies. After registration, the Gypsies were issued passes on which their racial identity was indicated. This law also placed further restriction on Gypsy mobility and was accompanied by orders that every police headquarters establish a unit for dealing with the Gypsy problem.

The next step in the solution of "the Gypsy problem" was a decision made at a meeting in September of 1939, convened by SS chief Reinhard Heydrich, to deport all Gypsies both from Germany proper and from those sections of Poland which had been incorporated into the Reich. A month later, the Nazis proclaimed the Settlement Edict which forbade all Gypsies to leave their homes or campgrounds. Subsequently, they were rounded up into special camps where they were held pending their deportation to that part of Poland, designated by the Germans as the General Government, which had not been incorporated into the Reich.

The deportation began in May of 1940 and lasted until October. Only some 3,000 of the total 30,000 German Gypsies who were slated for expulsion had been moved during this period. They were taken to various concentration camps, placed in ghettos or simply dumped in the middle of occupied Poland to fend for themselves. The following account suggests a fragment of the human suffering:

Elizabeth Taikoni was sent to Belzec in 1940. There she had to sell her belongings to get food. She was taken to Krychow and then released and allotted to a village to which she was taken by lorry. In her village nine Gypsies were settled and the villagers and the mayor were ordered to feed them. Later she went to Warsaw and lived in an empty house. The police ordered her to leave the house and she went to Siedlce and then Chelm. In Chelm she begged because she was unable to seek work as she had to look after her sick father. In 1942 she was arrested and sent to Maidanek with her father. He died there. Three months later she was freed and went to Tschenstochau. Here she looked for work but could find none, so again she had to beg. She was arrested once more for begging and sent to camp near Tschenstochau, then to another at Tomaczow and finally to a third camp where she stayed until the Russians liberated the camp. (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972: p. 79).

The deportation of Gypsies out of Germany was stopped in October 1940 not because there had been a change of goal, but for practical considerations: there was a shortage of transport. Besides, the Governor General of occupied Poland complained that it was impossible to organize and to administer his area while millions of Jews and Poles were being dumped into the Government General.

Germany's Gypsies were thus kept interned, waiting for the resumption of shipments. In addition to daily hardships, family anguish, and dreadful uncertainty, the Gypsies experienced harassment, discrimination and persecution. In late 1939, Gypsies were issued special work cards which severely restricted the type of jobs they could hold, and all other cards and permits were confiscated from them. In early 1942, Gypsies found that in the new labor laws their standing was the same as that of Jews. They lost all rights to sick leave and holidays, and they had to surrender 15 percent of their income as a special tax in addition to whatever other taxes and deductions they had to pay. Special laws pertaining to marriage regulated the Gypsies' personal lives. Gypsy children were frequently dismissed from school because there was an alleged shortage of space, and Gypsy orphans were thrown out of orphanages.

The arrests, confinement and general persecution of Germany's Gypsies were imitated in other lands. There were three major waves of arrests of European Gypsies: one in 1939, one in 1941 and one in 1943. The first to suffer were Gypsies living in Germany and Austria, then those in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the invaded lands of the Soviet Union, Holland, Belgium, Norway and France, and finally the Gypsies of Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria.

It is not known when exactly it was decided that the Gypsies should be exterminated, but it is likely that the initial decision was made by the head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, sometime in 1942. In September of that year, it was decided at a meeting called by Himmler that "Persons under protective arrest, Jews, Gypsies and Russians . . . would be delivered by the Ministry of Justice to the SS to be worked to death." (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972: p. 87). On December 16, 1942, Himmler further decreed that German Gypsies be delivered to Auschwitz. Similar decrees in other lands occupied by the Nazis speedily followed. By the end of 1942, the Nazis had committed themselves to the elimination of Gypsies from Europe.

The standard practice of the Nazis in the occupied countries was to round up the Gypsies, intern them in holding camps, and then finally ship them to Germany or Poland where they would either be used for slave labor or exterminated. In some cases, most notably in collaborationist Vichy France under Marshall Petain, the Gypsies who were rounded up were exploited for their labor for an extended period, then shipped off to death camps in Germany. Kenrick and Puxon estimate that of approximately 30,000 Gypsies sent from France to Buchenwald, Dachau and Ravensbruck, some 16,000 to 18,000 perished.

Whereas most the the Gypsies who were caught and interned in the various occupied lands eventually met their death in the Nazi concentration camps, there were instances of mass slaughter near their homes at the hands of local militias. The single most glaring example took place in Croatia where immediately after the German occupation the local fascist militia, the Ustashi, engaged in a blood-bath directed at Serbs, Gypsies and Jews.

In Serbia there were mass executions of Gypsies and Jews carried out by members of the regular German army. In one account of such an action, a junior army officer reported:

One has to admit that the Jews are very composed when they go to their deaths . . . they stand still . . . while the Gypsies cry, scream and move constantly, even when they are already on the spot where they are to be shot. Some even jumped into the ditch before the firing and pretended to be dead. (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972: p. 117).

It was also reported that the use of regular army soldiers for mass executions of civilians led to some demoralization in the ranks. In the end, those Gypsies who escaped the executions and random killings were shipped off to die in the concentration camps. It is estimated that out of a total Croatian Gypsy population of 28,500, only 500 survived the war.

Similarly, few Czech Gypsies managed to live to the end of the war, for the Nazi occupation lasted all the way from 1939 until 1945. A revealing look at the camps is provided by a Czech Gypsy, Barbara Richter, who managed to survive Auschwitz.

I was kept six weeks at the police station and then sent to Auschwitz (arriving there March 11, 1943). Two Gypsies tried to escape but were caught, beaten and hanged. Later my family was released from Lettig because the Richters were a well-established family in Bohemia. My mother came to Auschwitz voluntarily. Once I was given twenty-five blows with a whip because I had given some bread to a new arrival. One day I saw Elisabeth Koch kill four Gypsy children because they had eaten the remains of some food. Another time we stood for two hours in front of the crematorium but at the last moment were sent back to the barracks. I was given lashes a second time for taking bread from a dead prisoner. Three times they took blood from me. Dr. Mengele injected me with malaria. I was then in the sick bay with my uncle. Some Gypsies carried me to another block just before all the patients in the sick bay, including my uncle, were killed. (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972: pp. 134-35).

After 1939, the Nazis used occupied Poland as a dumping ground for Gypsies, Jews, and Poles evicted from the German annexations. There the Gypsies were restricted to ghettos, required to

wear an identifying white armband, and made to live under conditions that varied from some characterized by relative freedom to others consisting of confinement in concentration camps. They were subject to daily abuse and terror, and faced random roundups and arbitrary executions at any time. One post-war account relates the story of a Gypsy who was shot in the presence of his whole family simply because he had bought a pair of pants from a Russian.

When in the summer of 1941 the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union, the Gypsies of Ukraine, Belorussia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia fell prey to the same Nazi practices and policies as their brothers and sisters in other parts of Europe had already suffered. Abuse, persecution and the killing of Gypsies followed on the heels of the invasion. Wherever the conditions were suitable, i.e., where the administrative area was small and the Gypsies were easy to identify and isolate, for example in Estonia, the annihilation of the Gypsy population is estimated to have been complete.

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union was organized as a four-pronged attack which fanned out over a broad area ranging from the northeast to the far southeast. In the wake of each of these invading armies followed the notorious Einsatzgruppen. These were quasi-military, quasi-police extermination task forces ranging in size from 500 to 1200 men whose function was to follow the invading armies and to eliminate all real or potential enemies of the Reich amongst the occupied civilian populations. Gypsy men, women and children were among those whom the Einsatzgruppen units sought out and destroyed.

It is generally unknown that a considerable number of Gypsies perished in the infamous Kievan ravine known as Babi Yar. Anatoli (1970) reports that entire camps of Gypsies were led to Babi Yar unaware of what lay in store for them. There they joined the many tens of thousands of Jews, Ukrainians and Russians massacred on the same spot.

Gypsies were to be found in virtually every concentration camp operated by the Nazis. Among accounts of the Gypsy presence in these camps there are reports of attempted escapes launched by individuals or small bands. These attempts began right after the first incarceration and continued to the very end. Most ended tragically. One of the earliest such escapes was attempted in 1938, before the outbreak of the war, by a Gypsy who was an inmate at Buchenwald. Recaptured, he met a gruesome fate:

He was locked in a large box with iron bars over the opening. Inside, the prisoner could only hold himself in a crouching position. Koch (the camp commander) then had big nails driven through the planks so that each movement of the prisoner made them stick in his body. Without food or water, he spent two days and three nights in this position. On the morning of the third day, having already gone insane, he was given an injection of poison. (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972: p. 168).

Gypsies were frequently employed as guinea pigs in a wide assortment of medical experiments. The most extensively conducted experiments involving the greatest number of men and women were those designed to discover some cheap and easy way to sterilize undesirables. Considerations of medical ethics were thought inapplicable to work done on such experimental subjects, and horrible abuses followed. Gypsies were injected with typhus and spotted fever. In another camp they were given an injection of an experimental anti-gas solution and then forced into an enclosure filled with mustard gas to see how long they would survive.

The best documented contingent of Gypsies was the one at Auschwitz, where the Nazis had decided to create a special camp for them. The Gypsies were first brought to Auschwitz in large numbers at the end of 1942. The separate camp for them was established early in 1943 and lasted 16 months. Most of the Gypsies who were brought to Auschwitz, except those to be gassed immediately upon arrival, had their heads shaved and a number tattooed on their arms. They were then submitted to grueling work, disease, and chronic malnutrition.

At Auschwitz the Gypsies were assigned to wear a black triangle designating them as "asocials." Although the establishment of the special Gypsy camp had its advantages, since whole families were able to stay together, the Gypsies were thereby made easily accessible to the notorious Auschwitz medical experimenter, Dr. Mengele, who set up one of his human laboratories in one of the barracks within the Gypsy camp.

Before the final liquidation of the Gypsy camp in 1944, there were two large massacres of Gypsies there in the spring of 1943. In one incident, thousands of Polish Gypsies were gassed a few days after arrival, and in another a big contingent of camp Gypsies was

gassed. Even the final liquidation of the Gypsy camp did not take place until all the Gypsies deemed still capable of hard work were deported to work in the stone quarries at the Mauthausen camp. The rest were exterminated at some point in July or possibly August of 1944. From a number of different eyewitness accounts, it is possible to patch together the following picture of the elimination of the Gypsies at Auschwitz.

We were within easy earshot of the terrible final scenes as German criminal prisoners using clubs and dogs were let loose in the camp against the women, children and old men. A desperate cry from a young Czech-speaking lad suddenly rent the air. "Please Mr. SS man, let me live." Blows with a club were the only answer. Eventually all the inmates were crammed into lorries and driven away to the crematorium. Again they tried to offer resistance, many protesting that they were German.

Terrible scenes took place. Women and children were on their knees in front of Mengele and Boger crying "Take pity, take pity on us." Nothing helped. They were beaten down brutally, trampled on and pushed on to the trucks. It was a terrible gruesome night. Some persons lay lifeless after being beaten and were also thrown on to the lorries. Lorries came to the orphans' block about 10:30 and to the isolation block at about 11:00 p.m. The SS and four prisoners lifted all the sick people out and also 25 healthy women who had been isolated with their children.

At 23:00 lorries stopped at the hospital. 50 to 60 people were put into one lorry and thus the sick were brought to the gas chambers.

Until far in the night I heard cries and knew they were resisting. The Gypsies screamed all night . . . They sold their lives dearly.

Afterwards Boger and others went through the blocks and pulled out children who had hidden themselves. The children were brought to Boger who took them by the feet and smashed them against the wall . . . I saw this happen five, six or seven times.

We heard outside cries like "Criminal, Murderer." The whole thing lasted some hours. Then an SS officer came whom I didn't know and dictated to me a letter. The contents were "Special Treatment carried out." He took the letter out of the machine and tore it up. In the morning there were no more Gypsies in the camp. (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972: pp. 163-164).

Gypsies who were brought to Auschwitz after the liquidation of the Gypsy camp were gassed upon arrival. Thus, for example, the Gypsies in a shipment of 200 from Buchenwald and some 800 children in another shipment from Buchenwald were taken directly to the gas chambers. When Auschwitz was finally evacuated just before the end of the war, only a handful of Gypsies, scattered around the Auschwitz complex, were still alive.

Estimates of the total number of Gypsy casualties resulting from the Nazi holocaust vary considerably. In part, this is due to an absence of accurate and comprehensive statistics on the size of the pre-war European Gypsy population. The most conservative calculation is that of Kenrick and Puxon (1972: pp. 183-4) who suggest, with a warning that this figure may prove to be much higher when further documentation becomes available, that some quarter of a million Gypsies perished. Yoors (1971: p. 34) estimates that the real number is as high as 500,000 or 600,000, and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Kenny, 1973: p. 1076) estimate is 400,000.

As distressing as is the contemplation of the numbers of individual deaths included in these estimates, it is important to remember that the holocaust left many victims among the living, as is poignantly described by Kenrick and Puxon:

Even those outside the camps, who had escaped internment and the murder squads, had lived for the most part in appalling conditions deprived of normal human contact. They had been denied every basic right, outlawed and isolated in remote areas. This isolation caused a breakdown and reversal of the process of *natural* integration, producing a generation further handicapped by war-weary parents. Thus the holocaust had touched everyone, killing many, blighting all. Many suffered mental breakdown as a

result and some committed suicide. (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972: p. 188).

Such was the fate of those whom the Nazis had branded as "asocials."

### Section 2: The Poles

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland in a massive surprise attack employing a highly motorized and mechanized army of over a million and a half men. The element of surprise, a vast superiority in quality and number of tanks, planes and heavy guns, and the introduction of a revolutionary military strategy of attack resulted in the swift overpowering of Poland. Within a month, the occupation forces had complete control. Upon the cessation of combat, the territories constituting prewar Poland were divided roughly in half between Germany and the Soviet Union, in accordance with a secret agreement reached between Stalin and Hitler shortly before the invasion. Some 73,000 square miles of prewar Poland, with a population of 22 million, came under Nazi control, and about 77,000 square miles, with a population of some 13 million, came under Soviet control.

The outbreak of war also marked the outbreak of the holocaust. To be sure, the persecution of the Jews and Gypsies had already begun within Germany soon after Hitler's ascent to power in 1933, and Gypsies began to be interned in concentration camps as early as 1936. Nevertheless, the officially planned and executed policies of mass terror, general enslavement and wholesale extermination of innocent civilians on a scale never before recorded in the annals of man — the Nazi holocaust — did not begin until after the full-scale hostilities of 1939.

One of the most diabolical features of the Nazi holocaust was its racist basis. Individual Jews and Gypsies were condemned by definition to extermination. A Jew was not doomed because of any set of activities undertaken voluntarily; not for adherence to orthodoxy, nor for active political opposition to the Nazis, nor for membership in a proscribed political party. A Jew was doomed whether he or she was an assimilated or unassimilated Jew, a conservative or liberal or radical in politics. Thus, the terrible perversity of the Nazi condemnation of Jews lies in the fact that this

condemnation was rooted in the basis of one's being, not in what one had done or indeed could have done.

Thanks to the rich literature on the holocaust as suffered by the Jews, this feature of Nazi policy is widely understood. Unfortunately, knowledge about the Nazis' racist attitudes towards the Poles (and as we shall see later, the Ukrainians, Belorussians and Russians) is inadequately understood. Yet this point is crucial. For the war declared by Hitler in September 1939 was not simply a war against a state and its military apparatus — as were the Nazi declarations of war against France, Great Britain and the United States. The Nazi declaration of war against Poland was a declaration of war against the Polish people and against Polish nationhood. This fact made an enormous difference in the character of the occupation of Poland.

The first indication that the target of the Nazis was not just the Polish state or the Polish army appeared during the invasion itself. With terrible fury, the Nazi army attacked civilian targets. The invaders seemed to go out of their way to kill civilians. The military repeatedly bombed and strafed civilian targets from the residential sections of Warsaw to villages and hamlets out in the countryside. Nazi fighter planes even strafed individual shepherds out tending their flocks.

Once Poland was firmly under Nazi control, those territories to be administered by Germany were further divided into two categories. All of western Poland, including the regions of Poznania, Pomerania and Silesia, and sections of central and southern Poland, were annexed to the Reich. The total area of annexation included some 36,000 square miles, about half of all Polish lands under Nazi occupation. The justification for this incorporation lay in the claim that these were not Polish lands historically but rather German. The claim was spurious, as at least in part reflected by the fact that out of a total population of 10.7 million people living in the incorporated areas, there were only some 600,000 Germans. The remaining Polish territories not annexed outright into Germany were set up for administrative purposes as an occupation zone which was given the name "General Government."

Since Germans constituted but five percent of the population in those Polish territories incorporated into the Reich as "German land," the task of germanizing the area in question was formidable. Nonetheless, there was no indecision on the part of the Nazi leader-

ship as to what had to be done. For example, the top Nazi administrator of Poznan delivered the following speech a scant month after the beginning of the war:

After the victory of our armies, German colonists have taken up the struggle . . . In ten years there will not be a single plot of land that is not German, nor a single farm in the possession of anyone but our own colonists. Already they are coming from all the provinces of the Reich . . . to establish themselves in these regions. Each and every one of them comes to engage in a relentless struggle against the Polish peasant . . . If God exists, — it is He who has chosen Adolf Hitler to drive this vermin hence. (Republic of Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1942: p. 180).

The Nazi policy of imposed germanization in the annexed territories relied upon four strategies: a campaign of widespread and unmitigated terror; expropriation of land and possessions; deportations; and enslavement. The terror, designed to be so harsh as to paralyze all possible resistance, began with the invasion. In virtually every city, town and village in western Poland, there were wholesale massacres and executions of the leading citizenry.

The results of the first four months of Nazi occupation were especially telling in the city of Bydgoszcz. The largest municipality in Pomerania with a population of some 140,000, Bydgoszcz yielded 10,000 dead civilians in the first four months. Day after day, the Nazis rounded up priests, judges and lawyers, professors and teachers, merchants and industrialists, and worker and peasant leaders. They executed them by machine gun fire in the town square. Similar scenes of shootings and hangings occurred in almost every central square in each town or city in western Poland during the early occupation.

Any signs of resistance were suppressed through reliance upon the harshest measures. Fifty to one hundred randomly selected Poles would be killed for each fallen German. This principle of retribution was applied indiscriminately. Any time a German was wounded or killed — even if by accident or even if the death resulted from the activities of common criminals — the retribution was the same. An example of one such action undertaken on the basis of the principle of "collective responsibility" was recorded in *The Black*

*Book of Poland* (1942: pp. 47-8). On the evening of December 26, 1939, in Wawer, a small town outside Warsaw, two German soldiers were killed by two common hold-up men in an attempt to avoid arrest at a small restaurant. Hours later a battalion of military police arrived in town and began to assemble the civilians to be shot in retribution. In the middle of the night, the police went from door to door with a demand for hostages, until every tenth inhabitant of Wawer and neighboring Anin had come forward. Some 170 were rounded up and made to wait until morning with their hands held above their heads. At dawn, 107 were machine-gunned and the rest were made to dig a mass grave. The proprietor of the restaurant in question was hanged and buried, then exhumed and re-hanged in public. The restaurant owner was the only one of the victims who had even known of the original shooting incident.

The Nazis were well apprised of the central role that the Polish clergy had played in resisting all foreign attempts to destroy the fabric of Polish life. The single most victimized sector of Polish society in the incorporated territories was the clergy. The Nazis tried to destroy the Church completely. In the annexed region of Pomerania, only some 20 out of a pre-invasion total of 650 priests were permitted to remain at their posts. The others, 96 percent of the total, were either killed or sent to concentration camps. Among all the countries of occupied Europe, the Nazis arrested and abused not only the priests but also the bishops of the Church only in Poland.

By January of 1941, barely 16 months after the outbreak of the war, the total number of Polish priests killed is estimated at 700. An additional 3,000 were in concentration camps. A revealing look at Nazi treatment of the Polish clergy is contained in an eyewitness account recorded in *The Black Book*:

In the diocese of Lodz alone several dozens of priests and religious clergy, with their Bishop, Mgr. Tomczak, were sent to Radogoszcz (a camp). The newcomers were greeted with a terrible hail of blows with sticks, which did not spare even H.E. Mgr. Tomczak. The majority were then left without food for three days. The number of those detained amounted to about 2,000. They had to sleep on mouldy straw. The guards insulted and cruelly maltreated the prisoners.

One could not enumerate all the insults and humiliations inflicted upon them. The priests were made to wash out the latrines with their hands. It was not rare for the guards to order the prisoners to kneel down in a row, touch the ground with their foreheads, and call out, 'We are Polish pigs.' One day a policeman came into a room and said sarcastically, 'You would like me to hang an image of the Virgin on the wall for you to pray to for victory? That would be the last straw.' Then turning to the Bishop, he added, 'You also will be hanged soon.' A man who asked to be allowed to tend the Bishop's injured foot was shot. (Polish Ministry of Information, 1942: p. 355).

The terror employed by the Nazis to pacify the Polish population included an extensive use of torture. One of the most notorious sites was the training school in torture for the Gestapo at Fort VII in Poznan, a major urban center in the incorporated territories. The training course lasted three to four weeks and remained open until the spring of 1940 by which time its graduates had been sent to the General Government, Czechoslovakia, and the rest of Eastern Europe. New methods were tried. The resistance of the human body was measured. New cadres of recruits were taught proven techniques and encouraged to experiment.

Famous as a school of sadism, Fort VII used as its victims every rank of Polish society, but especially its elite, including priests, professors from Poznan University, and members of the Poznan city council. Prisoners were routinely beaten into unconsciousness, revived by being drenched with cold water, beaten again, revived, beaten. Prisoners were routinely whipped across the face until their eyelids closed with swelling. This was a preliminary exercise. Among the more bestial of practices was the attachment of a rubber hose to an air pump at one end, and insertion of its other end into the victim's rectum. The prisoner's intestines would be inflated until they burst.

Although the terror campaign conducted by the Nazis brought about some reduction in the Polish population living in the annexed lands, it of course could not reduce the numbers nearly fast enough — given that the total Polish population there was 10 million. Because the goal of Nazi policy was the de-polonization and germanization of these lands, the Nazis also embarked almost im-

mediately upon a policy of expropriation and deportation, a policy facilitated by the terror campaign. Within a month of the German invasion of Poland, Nazi authorities began a mass deportation of Poles and Jews from the annexed areas into the General Government. In most cases, the police would come to a home and order everyone to evacuate in twenty minutes. Homes, farms, land, furniture and all possessions were to be left behind, including the keys to the premises. These were intended for incoming German settlers. The expropriated Poles were collected at transport centers and shipped to the General Government. The deportees went unfed for days, and were mainly transported in unheated and locked cattle cars in that first terrible winter. Deaths from freezing, malnutrition, and asphyxiation were many, especially among the children.

Chronic fear and uncertainty spread throughout Poland. In February of 1940, a Belgian newspaper printed firsthand observations by Cardinal Hlond, the Primate of Poland:

In order that none should hide or escape expulsion, a decree was published in Poznan, on December 10 in the *Ostdeutscher Beobachter*, by the terms of which it was strictly forbidden to Poles and Jews to be absent from their homes between the hours of 7:30 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. It was between these hours that the Gestapo would fall upon this or that group of houses, rounding up the inhabitants at a rate of from five to fifteen hundred a night. Pre-occupied with the fear of such a possibility, people were unable to sleep, and passed the nights fully dressed, because only a few minutes were allowed them in which to get ready to leave their dwellings, and those who were not ready to go at once were put out in whatever clothes they had on their backs. (Polish Ministry of Information, 1942: p. 171).

The ultimate goal of this resettlement plan was to expel 5 million Poles from the annexed lands. The remainder were to be kept for slave labor. The actual number which the Nazis did manage to deport in this particular campaign was about 1.2 million Poles and 300,000 Jews.

At the same time that the Poles were being expelled from the annexed territories of western Poland, they were being reduced to

the status of non-persons. Signs posted such orders as "Entrance is forbidden to Poles, Jews and dogs" on the doors of numerous offices, hotels and restaurants in Poznan and many of the other cities in the incorporated areas. In some places regulations were published reserving the pavement for Germans. Poles were to walk in the road. Where Poles could use the sidewalks, regulations specified that Poles had to give way to Germans. Poles were altogether forbidden to enter most public parks and gardens, bathing places and beaches. Use of railways, trams, buses and taxis, though permitted, was circumscribed.

There is reason to believe that in the long run the fate of the Poles and the other Slavs would have been similar to that suffered by the Jews, the objects of the Nazis' most fervent hatred. Thus, T.H. Tetens (1961) maintains that "it is too often forgotten in the West that the extermination of the Jews in Europe was only to be a prelude for much more drastic action. . . ." (p. 94). And later: "Had the Germans succeeded with their plans they would have carried out a diabolical scheme of 'resettlement' and of 'special treatment' which would have caused the death of a couple hundred million Poles, Czechs, Ukrainians and Russians." (p. 95). However plausible such prognostications may appear from the extant evidence, the ultimate fate intended for the Slavs was interrupted by the Nazi defeat. What is, however, devoid of all speculation is the picture of Nazi attitudes and practices reconstructed from records of what in fact did take place.

The key rationalization required for genocide is the development of an attitude on the part of those to carry it out that its victims are less than human. A Nazi propaganda circular issued in January 1940 contained instructions for the German press:

The notice of the Press is drawn to the fact that there should be as little mention as possible of Poland. There is no object in publishing descriptions of what is happening at present in Poland. It is advisable to arrange under this category news and opinions of the Press, such for example as the following: 'Greiser proposes to settle a certain number of Germans in Western Poland,' etc. . . . The attention of the Press is drawn to the fact that articles dealing with Poland must express the instinctive revulsion of the German people against everything which is Polish.

Articles and news items must be drawn up in such a way as to transform this instinctive revulsion into a lasting revulsion. This should be done, not by special articles, but by scattering phrases here and there in the text.

Similarly it must be suggested to the reader that Gypsies, Jews and Poles ought to be treated on the same level. (Polish Ministry of Information, 1942: p. 433).

It was to be established in the minds of the occupiers that the Poles, Jews and Gypsies were to be considered as objects of revulsion. The next steps would follow.

The first and most obvious step applied to the Poles was to eradicate all ethnic and political consciousness. An explicit statement of this policy occurs in a speech made by the Governor General of the General Government, Dr. Hans Frank:

From now on the political role of the Polish nation is ended. It is our aim that the very concept of Polish be erased for centuries to come. Neither the republic, nor any other form of Polish state will ever be reborn. Poland will be treated as a colony and Poles will become slaves in the German empire. (Dziewanowski, 1977: p. 114).

From the beginning, the Nazis engaged in the wholesale destruction of Polish statues, monuments, shrines and so on. Furthermore, any expression of Polish pride or patriotism, such as the showing of a Polish flag or the singing of the Polish anthem, was strictly proscribed and punished by death or incarceration in a concentration camp.

Executions and massacres were widespread. The Nazis did not stop at the elimination of potential leaders of a possible future resistance, such as the members of the clergy, professionals, and civic leaders who might be tempted to organize. They also conducted many indiscriminate massacres of women and children. At Bydgoszcz, for example, the Nazis rounded up about a hundred 12 to 16-year-old boys in the streets and herded them up the steps of the Jesuit Church where they were all machine-gunned to death.

Madajczyk has compiled a whole volume consisting of nothing other than the detailing of instances of the Nazi terror campaign in

the Polish countryside, in which a minimum of ten victims was involved. In this work, not yet translated into English, *Nazi Terror in Polish Villages, 1939-1945* (1965), one finds a wealth of evidence that the Nazis aimed at a very substantial reduction of the Polish population.

Madajczyk's work contains much valuable information about the wholesale killings of Polish peasants. He includes firsthand accounts of massacres witnessed by some who, at times almost miraculously, lived to tell about them. One such eyewitness report, representative of many, may be condensed and paraphrased as follows:

The 18th of May in 1943 began as a beautiful spring day in the Polish farming village of Szarajowka in the county of Bilgorajski. As always, its inhabitants had begun their chores early. Without warning, at about 9 a.m., the news that Nazi detachments were surrounding the village spread panic. The first to try to flee discovered that the village was surrounded on three sides and that one side (owing, it turned out, to the tardiness of one SS detachment), in the direction of the village of Chmielek, was for some 15 minutes open. This oversight on the part of the police was quickly corrected and most of Szarajowka's inhabitants were trapped.

Once Szarajowka was sealed from escape, the various participating police and military units, including the Gestapo and SS, divided up into small groups and fanned out into the village. Most of the young men of the village were shot in the streets. All others, including women and children, were herded into the village square. The livestock and all valuable possessions were packed onto carts and taken away. Some of the villagers cried, others seemed paralyzed with fear, a few laughed hysterically.

At about noon time the commandant of the Nazi units ordered that all the people in the square be led into selected homes and stables. The SS men sealed all windows and barricaded all doors with wooden beams. They scattered straw over the buildings. Then they brought fire forward. As the smoke penetrated, then the flames, shrieks arose. The squeals and cries of the children could be distinguished from the wails of the elderly above the crackling of the rapidly burning wooden frames. A woman crawled free from one falling building and was shot on the spot. The strike force then proceeded to pour gasoline over the remaining structures in the village and set them aflame so that the entire village was burned. In

an hour, all the cries, screams and moans had ceased. A few who had managed to survive the action by hiding in cellar corners crawled to safety into the corn fields under the cover of the smoke. After the whole village had been torched, the Nazis departed.

A few hours later, the handful of survivors and some people from outside the village came back to see what remained. At first it was thought by most of the outsiders that the village's inhabitants had been taken away somewhere, and even the eyewitness who later recorded this account, being dazed for a while, was unsure of what he had seen. However, once evening approached and the cinders had cooled sufficiently enough to allow people to search through the rubble, there was no longer any doubt. The heaps of charred and twisted bodies were macabre. The eyewitness found the bodies of his own wife, son and daughter.

The only remaining sign of the village is a mass grave with a tablet which bears the name "Szarajowka." (Majajczyk: 1965, pp. 148-152).

Another representative example of Nazi terror in Poland took place in the General Government soon after the invasion, in November 1939. The Nazi authorities in Cracow announced a meeting of the full faculty of the Jagiellonian University, one of Europe's oldest and for centuries the leading center of Polish intellectual and cultural life. The ostensible purpose was a lecture about the "Attitude of the German Authorities to Science and Teaching." Once the faculty was gathered at the designated lecture hall, the head of the Gestapo in Cracow announced that all present were under arrest. Thereupon the Gestapo began manhandling the professors, hauling them off to prison, shoving, beating and kicking them. Out of a total of 176, 170 were kept in a prison for a short while, then sent to the concentration camp Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen. There they were beaten and tortured. The well publicized treatment of the Jagiellonian professors, however, raised a stir in international circles. The Nazis decided to release about 100 of the interned academics some three months after their arrest. Fourteen had been killed in the camp, and three others died soon after release. Among those not released a small number was kept at Sachsenhausen and approximately 40 others were shipped to Dachau where most of them perished.

Many professors and researchers at other Polish universities were also arrested, interned in concentration camps and killed —

unfortunately, outside the limelight of worldwide attention.

On June 14, 1940, the concentration camp at Auschwitz opened. Most of the first prisoners were Poles. The concentration camps were not the same as the annihilation camps, although in many cases both were to be found in the same complex of camps. The first gassings in Auschwitz were carried out in September of 1941, and the construction of Auschwitz's annihilation camp, Birkenau, was begun immediately after. The first camp built primarily for annihilation was Chelmno, which opened in December of 1941. Other annihilation camps or sub-camps were Belzec, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka. The annihilation camps consisted of extensive gassing facilities designed to exterminate great numbers of people in the shortest period of time.

Although in the end the result for their victims was usually death, the intent behind the concentration camps was not wholesale extermination but the intensive extraction of slave labor from the prisoners at the smallest possible investment in food and upkeep. At Auschwitz alone, 90 percent of the more than 900,000 men and women who were registered into the concentration camp during the war died there. In addition, perhaps as many as two million — the overwhelming majority of whom were Jews — were gassed immediately upon arrival and never registered into the camp.

A Polish Catholic, Jan Komski, was in the inaugural transport of 756 prisoners to Auschwitz. He escaped and was recaptured, and later was incarcerated in Birkenau, Buchenwald and Dachau. Miraculously, he survived. In an interview, he recalled that the average life expectancy in many of the camps was about three weeks. People who were still alive after twelve weeks were frequently executed on the assumption that they must be stealing food. Only a very few, like him, survived all four years.

Life in the camps approximated hell. Vulnerable to being killed at any minute, on any pretext, inmates were humiliated so as to be brought to think of themselves — or, perhaps, so that their jailers could think of them — as animals. They were worked to the limit of endurance, despite being fed a starvation diet of one piece of bread and a bowl of watery soup per day. In many camps the workday lasted 16 hours.

The camps produced death. They also tried to produce total dehumanization and demoralization. In an interview, Komski recalled:

People arrived in trainloads, maybe after traveling days without food or water. They'd be shoved out and screamed at and hit, knocked down, beaten for no reason. You'd see them lined up, hair shaved off, in the striped suits, and barefoot. Already some of them are hurting, standing there in their soft feet on the rocks. And this SS guy comes along in hobnail boots and walks on their feet. That's just for being there. (Kernan, 1979: p. N1).

Some of those who managed to avoid immediate death simply faded away psychically until they perished. These were the people who could not cope with the madness surrounding them — the constant threat of death, the random viciousness and brutality of everyday life, the sheer irrationality. The tiny number of those who survived did so because of resourcefulness, remarkable luck, and an intense will to live.

In Auschwitz, there were representatives of between 30 and 50 nationalities mutually caught in the Nazi web. Poles were both among the first to be incarcerated and among the most numerous to perish in the camps. A precise count is not available, but the estimate is about 1 million.

In addition to executions, massacres and concentration camp internments, the Nazis in Poland made use of two other methods of depopulation. The first was starvation. At various points during the occupation the Nazis made decisions intended to reduce the population of the cities, especially Warsaw, through starvation. Food supplies were kept at a minimum, and if it were not for the black market, which at many times supplied a substantial portion of the cities' food, additional hundreds of thousands would have perished. It is difficult to find reliable estimates of how many Poles starved to death. Along with those who died in non-war-related massacres, in the concentration camps, and in the annihilation camps, they helped to swell the numbers of those not to be found in the postwar census statistics, which were so much lower than those at the outbreak of the war.

The Nazis had another technique by which dramatically to reduce the Polish population. Directed primarily against women, Nazi authorities engaged in forced medical experiments and sterilization. It is again difficult to determine how many were vic-

timized in this way. However, one young girl's account was recorded in a letter:

Last Tuesday I received the order to report to the Labor Bureau. There were about five hundred girls in all. We were compelled to strip and to remain naked as the Lord created us. A doctor first examined our lungs; then he inserted from below a long tube. Through that tube he thrust a long pin, and some long, narrow scissors, white hot. He cut several times; the blood flowed and I fainted. He performed that operation on all the young girls there. It was a crime. I was ill for three days. On Friday they sent word that I was to get ready to go away; and next Tuesday a whole transport is to be sent to Germany but no one knows exactly where. (Polish Ministry of Information, 1942: p. 112).

Many Polish women were sterilized and deported to Germany for forced labor. Others were abducted for service in military brothels.

When the occupation finally came to an end in 1945, and Poland's experience with the Nazi holocaust was over, the final toll was 6 million dead. (The official report of the Polish Bureau of Wartime Reparations from which this statistic is derived, is cited in Madajczyk, 1970: vol. 2, p. 371). Of these, 3 million were Polish Christians and 3 million were Polish Jews. It is further estimated by Dziewanowski (1977: p. 143) that of the total 6 million, some 600,000 died as the result of direct hostilities, i.e., while fighting for the Polish armed forces during the invasion, or while participating in armed resistance during the occupation. The rest were victims of the holocaust.

This holocaust devoured over half of Poland's educated classes. Among clerics, over 2,600 priests of the Polish Roman Catholic Church perished at the hands of the Nazis. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the overall casualty figures do not include the many victims of one or another kind of brutalization who were to be marked forever by their experiences of torture, internment, forced sterilization, medical experimentation, or the like.

In the holocaust, barbaric behavior became fully endorsed and implemented by the full organizational power of a modern state. Conceptions of morality and decency were turned upside down.

Things were made to become their very opposites, as in a particularly revealing statement by Governor Frank of the General Government: "Law is all that which serves the German people. Illegality is all that which is harmful to that people." (Polish Ministry of Information, 1942: p. 8). Thus, to the dismay and horror of the Poles, law was transformed by Nazi fiat into institutionalized lawlessness.

### Section 3: The Ukrainians

In 1945 the American journalist Edgar Snow published an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* titled "The Ukraine Pays the Bill" in which he reported on the state of affairs at the end of the Second World War. This first-hand report was based on the author's own travels and investigations in Ukraine almost immediately after the Nazis had been driven out.

This whole titanic struggle, which some are apt to dismiss as "the Russian glory," has, in all truth and in many costly ways, been first of all a Ukrainian war. And greatest of this republic's sacrifices, one which can be assessed in no ordinary ledger, is the toll taken of human life. No fewer than 10,000,000 people . . . have been 'lost' to the Ukraine since the beginning of the war . . . No single European country has suffered deeper wounds to its cities, its industry, its farmlands and its humanity. (Snow, 1945: p. 18).

Although the rough estimate of 10 million in human losses is probably reasonably accurate as a figure representing total losses during the war, the number of non-combatants who perished because of Nazi ideology is somewhere between a third and a half of the total. Included in this figure are approximately 900,000 Ukrainian Jews. Combat fatalities and forced deportations account for half or more of the total reduction in population.

The onset of the Nazi holocaust in Ukraine was particularly bitter for many Ukrainians because their expectations preceding the German invasion were so at variance with what ensued. These expectations arose primarily because of the painful experiences of the period between the two world wars. Western Ukraine had been

incorporated into Poland at the end of World War I, with considerable antagonism between Poles and Ukrainians. But the larger part of Ukraine was incorporated into the Soviet Union, with far greater bitterness. Besides enduring the arrests, purges and general terror which people in all parts of the Soviet Union experienced, the Ukrainians had suffered through their own holocaust less than a decade before the beginning of the Nazi holocaust. A vast number of Ukrainian peasants — estimated at anywhere between 4 to 7 million — had deliberately been starved to death by Soviet authorities in the years 1932-1933.

When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939 and then afterward divided control over all pre-war Polish territories with the Soviet Union, the part of Western Ukraine that had been part of Poland was absorbed into the Soviet Union. Thus, between the years 1939 and 1941, all of Ukraine was part of the USSR. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, many Ukrainians openly welcomed the Germans as liberators from the terror of Soviet rule. They were unfamiliar with the real character of the Nazis and naively assumed that representatives of the German nation, a western nation of great poets, philosophers and scientists, would bring relief from barbarism. Western Ukrainians had relatively kind memories of life under the Austro-Hungarian empire, of which Western Ukraine had been a part for a long time prior to World War I. They thought that German administration would be like that of the generally humane and temperate Hapsburg monarchy. Indeed, they hoped that Germany would want Ukraine as a buffer between Germany and Russia. The leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) had been misled, in part by their own hopes and in part by contacts with German military intelligence, into thinking that Nazi Germany would support the establishment of an independent and unified Ukraine. In fact, the OUN declared the establishment of a Ukrainian state almost immediately after German forces had driven the Soviets out of the capital of Western Ukraine, Lviv. The Nazis rounded up the OUN leadership only days after this declaration and sent them to concentration camps.

The first representatives of the Third Reich with whom the Ukrainian population came in contact were the soldiers of the regular army. These soldiers, finding themselves welcomed by a native population, at least during the initial stages of the war, responded with courtesy and in some cases even returned tokens of

friendship. However, as the fast-moving front raced to the east, the regular army units were followed by the SS, Gestapo and various other police units assigned to implement Nazi policies in the Slavic lands.

Following within days behind the rapidly attacking armies were the special extermination task forces, the Einsatzgruppen. These task forces, assembled from SS and special military, Nazi party and police units, executed and massacred any and all "undesirables." All Jews fell into this category by definition. So also, as in Poland, did the Ukrainian civilian elites. The Nazi killings of civilians were so wanton that they occasionally caused revulsion even among members of the Einsatzgruppen. Toland (1976: vol. 2, p. 810) cites the case of an SS man who wrote to Germany from a location in Ukraine that he had suffered a nervous breakdown after receiving an order to kill Jews and members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia. There were four task forces on the Soviet front, totalling 3,000 men. These relatively few killers, along with assorted collaborators, managed to kill an estimated one-half million people within six months — principally Jews, but also Ukrainians, Gypsies, Russians, Belorussians and others. Two of the four Einsatzgruppen operated in Ukraine.

Once in military control, the Nazis divided Ukraine into four jurisdictions. The bulk of Ukrainian territory, the northern, central and southern regions, was organized into an occupation zone officially designated the Reichskommissariate Ukraine. The easternmost sections of Ukraine were considered to be part of the German military zone because of their proximity to the battlefronts. The westernmost regions of Ukraine were incorporated into the General Government. A slice of southwestern Ukraine, given the name Transnistria, was ceded by Germany to Rumania as a reward for its participation in the campaign against the Soviet Union.

Life in any part of Nazi occupied Ukraine was filled with daily terror. Inhabitants were arrested, sent to concentration camps, and shot for real or imagined transgressions. But in that part of Western Ukraine incorporated into the General Government, terrible as life was, conditions were not as horror-ridden as life in the occupation zone Ukraine.

The principal reasons were two. The Nazis displayed special hostility and loathing toward those people who had lived in areas of Eastern Europe which had been part of the Soviet Union prior to the

Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. The occupation zone Ukraine was located on territory which had constituted a large part of the Soviet Ukraine since its inception in the early 1920s. Since the whole of this territory was occupied by the Nazis for over two years, Ukrainians living there bore much of the brunt of the Nazis' fury and contempt toward the Slavic *Untermensch*. Secondly, the occupation zone had the great misfortune of having Erich Koch assigned to it as its commissioner.

The *Untermensch* campaign was designed to drive home the idea that the Slavs living in the Soviet Union were subhumans. This campaign, begun by Himmler and the SS, was based not only on the Nazis' racism toward the Slavs but also on their wild hatred for the communist USSR. The alleged "subhumanness" of these Slavs was imputed to be traceable to racial origins, but the *Untermensch* propaganda also stressed that living under Bolshevik rule had led to a further dramatic dehumanization of the populace.

One of the chief goals of the *Untermensch* campaign was to eradicate any possible feelings of inhibition on the part of individual Germans. Hitler projected the settlement of 20 million Germans in Ukraine within a period of 20 years. Those Ukrainians who would remain would become their serfs or slaves. Others would be killed or deported. In order to help rationalize this process, Ukrainians and Russians were claimed to be semi-savage inferiors, incapable of reason, more closely resembling machines or animals than human beings. Nazi officials referred to the local population in occupation zone Ukraine as helots, subhumans, and half-monkeys.

Even among Nazis, Commissioner Eric Koch was thought to be unusually brutal. Koch's attitude toward the Ukrainians may best be captured by his claims that these people stand "far below us and should be grateful to God that we allow them to stay alive." (Dallin, 1957: p. 149). Dallin cites excerpts from the recorded minutes of an April 1942 meeting of Koch's staff during which it was stated that, "Strictly speaking, we are here among Negroes." (Dallin, 1957: p. 148).

Koch's prescriptions for rule rested on the premise that the only communication the people would understand would be a beating over the head with a mallet or a flogging. These practices became commonplace. Koch ordered that anyone who showed any signs of intelligence should be shot on the spot, for such a person was dangerous. The executions begun by the Einsatzgruppen

continued under the non-military administration. Among the many to perish during the initial months of this administration was the entire editorial staff of the Kievan newspaper *Ukrains'ke Slovo*, whose members were shot by the Gestapo in February of 1942. Among the victims of this particular action was the famous poet Olena Teliha.

The single most infamous place in Ukraine under the Nazis was Babi Yar. Located on the outskirts of Kiev and deriving its name from the large ravine to be found at its center, Babi Yar initially gained its notoriety as the mass graveyard for Kiev's Jewish populace. Within a week after the Nazis won control of Kiev in September of 1941, Kiev's central downtown section was dynamited in a huge conflagration in which the Nazis lost a good number of officers and men. Although it was reasonably evident that such a large-scale and expertly planned operation could only have been arranged by the Soviet secret policy just before its exit from the city, the enraged Nazis used this debacle as an excuse for rounding up Kiev's Jews. Informed that they would be deported, the Jews were told to report to Babi Yar whereupon, according to Anatoli, some 70,000 were machine-gunned to death within a matter of days. Kiev's Jewish population was annihilated.

Babi Yar continued to be a killing center for two more years after the massacre of the Jews. Babi Yar offered a convenient natural grave. As new shipments of people were herded in, they would be lined up at the edge of the ravine. Upon being shot, they would tumble right into it. Later, the Nazis brought in ovens which they used to destroy the evidence of their activities. They also opened up a primitive concentration camp for workers needed at the extermination site. These workers were also killed.

The best known of the Ukrainians who perished at Babi Yar were the members of the famous soccer team Kiev Dynamo. Before the war, the team was one of the best in the Soviet Union, and its members became the darlings of Kiev. Whenever they were able to defeat the team from Moscow, they were scoring a symbolic victory over Ukraine's long-time oppressors. The story of their demise at the hands of the Nazis is told in A. Anatoli's fascinating account of Kiev during the German occupation, *Babi Yar*.

Dynamo was disbanded at the outbreak of the Nazi-Soviet war. Many of its players found jobs at a central Kiev bakery and organized an amateur team. They would gather on a nearby field

after work to practice or to play. Even though they maintained a low profile, word eventually reached the authorities and they were summoned to appear before the city's Nazi officials. A game was arranged in Kiev's public stadium between the Ukrainian team, which had adopted the new name "Kiev Start," and the local German army team. The Nazis were convinced that they could prove Aryan racial superiority in athletics. They were mistaken. The first game between Kiev Start and the German army team ended in a Start victory — much to everyone's surprise, since the Start players were in poor shape. The hungry and ragged Ukrainians who filled the less desirable half of the stadium seats were delighted. The Germans were annoyed. The newspaper account of the game emphasized the fact that although the individual members of the army team were superb players, they had not had any time to play as a team. A number of subsequent games with other teams was arranged, but each ended in a Start victory. Finally the authorities arranged a match to be held on August 6, 1942, between Start and the German Flakelf team, a team reputed to be the best and the strongest German squad.

The Start victory over Flakelf, a team which had never lost a game on occupied territory, stunned the Nazis. They let it be known to the Start players that there would be another game against Flakelf three days later, but that Start would be expected to lose. In self-respect, the Start players refused to throw the game. They again gave the Germans a beating. The final score was never recorded and the game was never reported in the press. Afterward, the team was dispatched to Babi Yar.

A steady stream of executions took place on location in Babi Yar, but the grisly site also served as a major disposal facility for bodies of victims who were killed in the mobile gas vans that operated in Kiev. Sometimes the victims were gassed en route and at other times they were gassed once the vans reached their destination. Then the bodies would be unloaded and burned either in the large open fires burning in Babi Yar or in the ovens:

On one occasion a gas-van arrived full of women. When the usual procedure was over and the shouting and banging had died down, the door was opened. After the fumes had cleared the van was seen to be packed full of naked girls.

There were more than a hundred of them, pressed tightly together, sitting on each other's knees. They all had their hair done up in scarves, as women do when they take a bath. They had probably been told when they were put into the van that they were on their way to the baths . . . The drunken Germans hooted with laughter, explaining that they were waitresses from the Kiev nightclubs . . . When Davidov lifted them and laid them on the stack, covered in filth and still warm, the breath would come out of their mouths with a faint noise, and he got the impression again that they were alive but had simply lost consciousness. They were all burned in the fire. (Anatoli, 1970: pp. 378-79).

By the time the killing operations at Babi Yar had ceased, both the ravine itself and an area ranging over a square mile around the ravine was crammed with corpses. Anatoli reports that people ended up in Babi Yar for the most frivolous of offenses: a joke considered irreverent toward the Germans, a baker who had retained a loaf of bread.

It is difficult to arrive at precise casualty figures for those who were massacred at Babi Yar. Estimates place the number at between 150,000 and 200,000. This figure is plausible. Approximately 300,000 of Kiev's prewar population of 900,000 were killed by the Nazis. Many other Kievans starved and many were deported to Germany for forced labor. One of every two Kievans perished during the occupation.

After German rule became entrenched and after the random terror at the early stage of occupation had abated, the Nazis began to institutionalize their policies. On September 18, 1942, the Nazi minister of justice, Otto Thierack, issued a decree whose intent was to condemn, among others, Ukrainian "asocials" to death. Part of the order read as follows:

There is an agreement that because our State decided the settlement of the Eastern Problem and because of the goals which we are going to pursue there, the Jews, Poles, Gypsies, Russians and Ukrainians will no longer be tried by the regular courts in the future but should be dealt with by the Reichsführer-SS. (Kamenetsky, 1961: p. 157).

In itself, the decree does not seem unusual. But three additional factors must be brought to light. First, the order was designed to apply not only to people who had been convicted of some criminal act but also to those who were simply charged. Second, what was illegal in the Nazi system of justice was anything that opposed the furthering of German interests. An "asocial," as construed by the Thierack decree, was any person who could be charged by any segment of the Nazi administrative structure with undermining Nazi interests. Third, the relegating of jurisdiction over those "asocials" to the head of the SS meant that these people were being given death sentences. They were condemned to being worked to death in the concentration camps.

The concentration camps to which Ukrainians were sent were to be found inside and outside Ukraine. A map of concentration camp locations drawn up in a 1963 Soviet Ukrainian study shows 160 such Nazi camps in Ukraine during the war. These camps held anywhere from two to tens of thousands of prisoners. There were, however, no mammoth camps such as those found primarily in Poland, nor any mass extermination camps such as Auschwitz or Maidanek. These latter were equipped to liquidate tens of thousands of people daily. They were aimed mostly at the Jews, who suffered worse than any.

Because the Nazis refused to grant Red Army prisoners prisoner-of-war status, the concentration camps in Ukraine contained both civilians and POWs alike. The chief clusterings of concentration camps in Ukraine were to be found near Rivne in Volhynia, near Kharkiv and in the Donetsk region. One of the largest was the Yaniv camp on the outskirts of Lviv. Established in November of 1941, soon after the Nazi invasion, this camp saw 200,000 inmates perish. One of the bizarre features shared by Yaniv with some of its larger sister camps in Poland and Germany was that it had a symphony orchestra, made up of prisoner musicians. The composers amongst this group were ordered to write a tune which was entitled "The Tango of Death." Although membership in the orchestra exempted the musicians from early liquidation, they too were killed before the camp was closed.

Testimony from survivors of Yaniv shows that the camp commandant, an SS officer by the name of Gustav Wilhaus, personally participated in acts of random terror and sadism. He frequently engaged in target practice with his automatic from the balcony of the camp administration building, using the working

prisoners as targets. He amused his family by having 2 to 4-year-old children tossed in the air so that he could shoot them in flight.

The first contingent of Ukrainians arrived at Auschwitz in July of 1942. The inaugural group consisted primarily of nationalists, but later shipments included persons sent for a variety of reasons. The situation of the nationalists was sadly ironic: naively hoping that Germany would free Ukraine, the nationalists entered Auschwitz where the famous slogan on the gate read "Work makes one free." Two brothers of OUN leader Stepan Bandera perished in Auschwitz. Among the most prominent of those who perished in one of the other large concentration camps outside Ukraine was the famous poet Oleh Olzhych, who was tortured and killed in Sachsenhausen.

The Nazis were obsessed with the notion of a racial hierarchy of peoples, and they made sure to introduce an ordering amongst peoples in each and every context of social interaction. Thus, even in concentration camps the Nazis enforced the creation of a caste system, as was later recalled by a Danish survivor of the Sachsenhausen camp.

When it was a question of standing in a queue in front of the clinic, Norwegians, Dutch and Germans always had to stand in front. Right at the bottom came Jews and Gypsies. Then there were the middle classes, from Frenchmen and Belgians down to Ukrainians. (Kenrick & Puxon, 1972: pp. 174-75).

Neither the ordering in the caste system nor the concomitant differences in the status and treatment it produced ever changed, whether this involved civilians, prisoners of war, forced laborers, or concentration camp inmates.

Among the manifold causes of death in the concentration camps was a loss of the will to live. One such case is recalled in the memoirs of a Ukrainian survivor of Auschwitz, Petro Mirchuk. Mirchuk and the man in question were assigned to the same work detail at Auschwitz.

When we began digging . . . a friend of mine, Dr. Yatsiv, was working with me . . . He told me that he intended to go to the *Krankenhaus* (infirmary) that night. I tried to

persuade him not to do it because we knew that when anyone went into the *Krankenhaus*, it was very rare that he ever left alive. The physicians did not help the prisoners survive; they helped them die. He told me that it made no difference to him because he could not live very long anyway. He said that when we had first come into Auschwitz the brutal beatings had cost him six teeth, several broken ribs, and damaged kidneys. He said that he was spitting up blood, so that even had he been released that day and put in a normal hospital he could not expect to survive for more than one or two months. He preferred to go to the *Krankenhaus* and die as soon as possible. (Mirchuk, 1976: p. 49).

Countless numbers of Ukrainians were liquidated in individual terror strikes. The standard practice of Nazi occupation authorities was to designate at random 50 or 100 local civilians who would be held as hostages, to be replaced as needed, against the eventuality of real or perceived anti-German actions anywhere in the surrounding area.

Both the incidence and severity of the Nazi terror campaign in central and eastern Ukraine were, on the whole, greater than that experienced in the western sections of Ukraine, though this difference became obscured toward the end of the occupation. A number of randomly chosen examples help to illustrate the character of the terror.

During the winter of 1941-1942, during the first half-year of the occupation of the eastern sections of Ukraine, the Nazis would hang 40 to 70 citizens of Kharkiv every 3 or 4 days. These executions were carried out as the result of the occasional sightings of Red partisans in the district around Kharkiv. The victims, prominently displayed by being hanged from balconies of buildings located on principal thoroughfares, were kept aloft for days at a time.

In November of 1941, the Nazis executed 400 men from Kiev after some communication lines were damaged. In November of 1942, a German train derailed near Zaporizhia, possibly but not certainly because of sabotage. Seventy peasants from the nearby village of Balabyno were executed. In the spring of 1943, Nazi police units massacred 2,000 peasants in the village of Hubynykha for reasons unknown. In February of 1943, the Nazis slaughtered 200

men, women and children in the village of Znamenka in the Dnipropetrowsk region. In the fall of the same year some 800 men from the south-central city of Kherson, hoping to evade the Nazi dragnet which was rounding up people to be deported to Germany for slave labor, hid in the Dnipro marshes. However, the police came to learn of their concealment. The marsh was surrounded and the men were massacred.

Beginning in September of 1943, the Nazi terror became intensified in the western sections of Ukraine. Hundreds of villages and hamlets were the objects of unannounced machine-gun and small-gauge artillery attacks. Then the police swept in to organize labor deportations or to confiscate farm products. In November of 1943 in Lviv, the Nazis massacred several barracks-full of slave laborers who had demanded adequate rations. In the winter of 1942-1943, hundreds of villages and hamlets in extreme northwestern Ukraine were burned to the ground and the people executed or deported for slave labor to Germany.

In July of 1943 the Ukrainian and Czech inhabitants of Malyn, a small town in Volhynia, were herded into the village church, school-house and a number of nearby barns. Thereupon these buildings were set aflame and some 850 villagers were burned to death. During the same month, Nazi police units conducted mass arrests of the leading citizens of various Volhynian communities, many of whom were then executed. In January of 1944 large units of army, Gestapo and police units carried out extensive pogroms against 12 villages in the Terebovlia region. These pogroms were characterized by public torture, mass executions and forced labor deportations. These incidents of terror represent but a fraction of the total number of Nazi atrocities committed against the civilian population of Ukraine.

Another means of population reduction employed by the Nazis in Ukraine was planned starvation. Kamenetsky reports in his *Secret Nazi Plans for Eastern Europe* that the decision to create famine conditions in Ukraine was apparently made at a conference in November of 1941 in East Prussia, attended by Hitler and high Nazi officials from the East. The Nazi administration imposed starvation upon the cities and those sections of the countryside which were non-food producing. This policy was reflected in an official report of the German Economic Armament Staff dated December 2, 1941:

The skimming of the agricultural surpluses from the Ukraine for distribution in the Reich is possible when Ukrainian inland traffic is reduced to a minimum. This objective is to be achieved by the following means:

1. By the elimination of the superfluous eaters (Jews and the population of the Ukrainian cities such as Kiev, which get no food rations at all.)
2. Through the drastic reduction of rations in the other Ukrainian cities.
3. By the reduction of consumption of the peasant population. It is natural that the population of the towns try to escape starvation, to which it is condemned . . . . (Kamenetsky, 1961: p. 146).

Whereas Ukrainians and others were dying of hunger, especially in Ukraine's largest cities, the Nazis were confiscating hundreds of millions of tons of foodstuffs for their armies in the East and shipping even larger quantities of food back to Germany. Even when there was a surplus of food for shipment, it was not allowed to be distributed to the starving indigenous population. The time of greatest suffering from famine was the period beginning with the fall of 1941 and lasting until the summer of 1942.

Hitler's goal of subjugating Ukraine and its neighboring Slavic countries for purposes of colonization involved a sustained policy of population reduction through executions, starvation and deportations. It also entailed a plan to reduce the remaining population to the status of servile dependents. Hitler decreed that education for the Slavs was dangerous. Himmler then specified that they were only to be taught how to sign their names, know enough arithmetic to count to 500 and learn "that it was God's will that they be obedient, conscientious, and polite toward the Germans." (Gross, 1979: p. 76). The following decree was made in January of 1942 for implementation in Ukraine:

School instruction in the non-German schools may be authorized, beginning February 1, 1942, for the lowest four grades of elementary school for pupils up to eleven years of age. (Dallin, 1957: p. 460).

Except at a few vocational-technical schools, education in occupation zone Ukraine was ended at the fourth grade level. All high schools and colleges were closed.

The Ukrainians were never slated for total annihilation, as were the Jews and Gypsies, and the Nazis never articulated a clear, positive program of genocide. Nevertheless, a racist ideology shaped and directed thought and action. Ukrainians and other Slavic nationalities were said not to constitute a people at all but rather an "indefinable mixture" (Koch) or a "conglomeration of animals" (Goebbels). This ideology, based on a primitive social Darwinism applied to nations and races, could not but result in the liquidation of many millions of these "subhumans."

There is no consensus on civilian or non-civilian casualty figures for Ukraine during the occupation. Stephen Prociuk (1977: p. 36) reports that there is disagreement on this question even among Soviet sources. And traditional Soviet hesitance to make public official records of the war and occupation further complicates matters. Nevertheless, judging on the basis of the comparatively conservative estimates listed in *Ukrains'ka RSR* (1969: vol. 3, p. 150), it is possible to say that Ukraine suffered a minimum of 5.5 million in direct total losses. Among these some 3.9 million were the civilian victims of the Nazi holocaust, a figure which includes the .9 million Ukrainian Jews (Dawidowicz, 1975: p. 544), who were annihilated. Such figures dull the mind, unless one tries to visualize the faces of the old and young, men and women, intellectuals and peasants, and all the days of sunshine and rain they would have seen had their lives not been wrenched from them.

#### Section 4: The Belorussians

After World War I, Belorussian territories had been divided into two parts: the larger eastern section was incorporated into the Soviet Union as the Belorussian SSR, and the smaller western section was incorporated into greater Poland. After the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, the Polish lands were partitioned between the Nazis and the Soviets. Western Belorussia was united with eastern Belorussia into an expanded Belorussian SSR. For two years, then, until the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, the whole of Belorussia was under Soviet rule.

The German *Blitzkrieg* in Belorussia moved as swiftly as elsewhere. Three weeks after the invasion began, Belorussia was wholly occupied. The Soviet civil and military apparatus in Belorussia crumbled, but not before the Soviet authorities, as they had in western Ukraine, hurriedly slaughtered political prisoners held in jail by the Soviet secret police.

Belorussians who had been mistreated under Polish rule or terrorized under Soviet rule (or both) initially viewed the German conquest favorably. In a variety of places the German army was greeted with the traditional symbols of welcome, bread and salt. Many felt relief that the reign of Stalinist terror was over. In addition, many members of the older generation recalled the decent treatment accorded them by the Germans during their occupation of Belorussia during the First World War. Finally, the local populace had been kept ignorant of what the Nazis had been doing in neighboring Poland for two years prior to their occupation of Belorussia, because the controlled Soviet press, after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939, portrayed Hitler and the Nazis in a favorable light. News of atrocities had been suppressed. Even the Belorussian Jews apparently had little inkling of what the Nazis represented. The Nazis themselves were surprised at this ignorance. For example, a Nazi journalist reported at the time that the Jews in Belorussia "who were remarkably badly informed about our treatment of the Jews in Germany, or even in Warsaw, which after all was not far away, had a sympathetic attitude, believing that we would leave them alone if they worked diligently." (Vakar, 1956: p. 172).

The familiar pattern of Nazi practices designed for the East soon manifested itself. The notorious Einsatzgruppen entered as the invading regular army forces moved eastward. Their primary targets in the first roundups were Jews. However, the Einsatzgruppen squads assaulted non-Jewish Belorussians as well. The Nazi occupation commissioner for the Slutsk region in October of 1941 complained about the random savagery practiced by the Einsatzgruppen units.

With indescribable brutality on the part of German policemen as well as Lithuanian partisans (organized by the German SS), the Jewish people, including Belorussians, too, were brought together from their apartments. There was shooting all over town, and corpses of dead

Jews piled up in several streets . . . Besides the fact that the Jews, including the artisans, were mistreated with frightful roughness before the eyes of the Belorussians, the Belorussians, too, were 'worked over' with rubber belts and rifle butts. There is no more question of an (anti-) Jewish action. Much rather, it looked like a revolution. (Dallin, 1957: pp. 206-207).

Not surprisingly, the Belorussian populace was horrified by such raids, and news of them spread rapidly. The brutality evinced by the Nazis was both shocking and incomprehensible.

Berlin had decided before the invasion that Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia would become part of the administrative unit designated as Reichskommissariate Ostland. As one of the four constituent parts of Ostland, Belorussia was organized as an occupation zone with the official title of Weissruthenische Generalbezirk. A section of southern Belorussia was attached to occupied Ukraine. A section of western Belorussia was incorporated into Germany. Only the central and western areas of Belorussia came under civilian Nazi administration. The eastern areas, due to their proximity to the front, remained under the jurisdiction of the German military. Both east and west were technically considered "occupied Belorussia."

The character of the Nazi holocaust in Belorussia was determined by three factors: the attitudes of the Nazis toward the Belorussians; the character of the local Nazi administration; and the military conditions peculiar to Belorussia. As a Slavic population living under Soviet rule, the Belorussians were included by the Nazis in the category of subhuman peoples. Although different Nazi officials chose to rate the Belorussians a little higher or the same as the other Slavs, there was nevertheless general agreement regarding how they were to be treated. As with the other Slavs, the general plan called for the depopulation, expulsion and assimilation of the Belorussians. Lubachko reports that in one such scheme, 75% of the Belorussians were either to be exterminated or expelled, while the remaining 25% — considered racially suitable — were to be assimilated into German stock.

At least as far as the temperament of the chief Nazi civil administrator, the general commissar Wilhelm Kube, was concerned, Belorussians were more fortunate than either the Poles or

Ukrainians. For, Kube, an older Nazi, adopted a partially paternalistic, condescending posture toward the Belorussians. He liked the fact that many of the natives were blue-eyed and blond, and he maintained that they must possess at least some Aryan blood in their makeup. Up until his assassination in September of 1943, Kube was a tolerable commissar, as far as Nazi commissars went. His successor, the SS General Von Gottberg, was considerably more harsh.

The Belorussians suffered severely, however, under the local military situation. To a much greater extent than in Poland or Ukraine, the Nazis had to contend with large-scale guerrilla warfare in Belorussia over an extended period of time. Huge civilian losses resulted. Indiscriminate terror campaigns were launched by the Nazis in retribution. The principal reason for the multiplication of the partisan bands — besides the terror and oppression of Nazi rule, was the favorable Belorussian terrain, broken by many forests and marshes. Guerrilla formations, both Soviet controlled and independent, were estimated to include as many as 300,000 fighters. The guerrillas were able to disrupt Nazi control often and successfully. The Nazis retaliated with demonstrations of brutality upon the nearest civilians, however innocent.

The first wave of Nazi terror in Belorussia was carried out by the Einsatzgruppen. Later, terror strikes were initiated either by the chief commissar or by the various police detachments. While Kube was the commissar for Belorussia, he authorized major police assaults primarily in cases of direct retribution for provocative guerrilla actions. However, the various police detachments, the SS, Gestapo, SD, etc., more often than not operated independently of the German civil administration. They engaged in thousands of acts of terror on their own authority. The men who served in these special units were indoctrinated into loathing and contempt for the subhuman Slav.

The Nazi police units were the chief agents of death and destruction. But there were also many cases of brutality practiced by the regular German army. One such incident took place in the eastern province of Mogilev:

In December 1941, a German soldier killed a native on his way back from a sawmill which was used by the Germans; his comrades attacked the Germans but were

mowed down by machine guns; all but one of the group were killed. The next day the Germans took seven men — all the males between twelve and sixty in our small village and shot them. (Vakar, 1956: p. 194).

As everywhere else in Eastern Europe, the Nazis arrested large numbers of people for a variety of real or imaginary offenses. Some were sent to concentration camps in Poland and Germany. Many were interned in camps or jails in Belorussia itself. Yet whether one was arrested for a reason or for no reason, or whether one was under police supervision, being in the hands of the Nazi police meant that one could perish at any moment, as becomes evident from the following account.

In January 1942 the SD one day took about 280 civilian prisoners from the prison in Minsk, led them to a ditch, and shot them. Since the capacity of the ditch was not exhausted, another thirty prisoners were pulled out and also shot . . . . Among these there was a Belorussian who in November 1941 had been turned in to the police for violating the curfew by fifteen minutes . . . (and) twenty-three Polish skilled workers sent to Minsk from one of the towns of the Government-General to relieve the shortage of specialists. They had been billeted in jail according to instructions of the police commander because allegedly there were no other billeting facilities. (Dallin, 1957: p. 207).

Among the most widely publicized terror strikes conducted by the police in Belorussia during the occupation were two which were carried out in retribution for anti-German actions. In September of 1943, a Gestapo dining room in Minsk was dynamited by Soviet provocateurs, teams of which were infiltrating into the large cities. Retribution was immediate. Nazi police units were given orders to round up all inhabitants living in a two block area in Minsk. Some 300 men, women and children were herded up and massacred. Among those who perished were also people who were employed in the German occupation administration. Weeks later, commissar Kube was himself assassinated, quite possibly by a guerrilla team. In retaliation for this killing, a widespread reign of terror was initiated in which innocent people were arbitrarily shot or hanged.

From the beginning of the occupation, the local population had to bear both individual outbursts and sustained campaigns of brutality. The Belorussians also had to endure daily beatings and robberies. For example, the SS men were notorious for walking around with riding sticks which they used to strike people in the face at whim, regardless of age or sex.

The Nazi campaigns of terror in Belorussia forced many citizens to flee into the forests. There they formed larger or smaller groups for improving their chances of survival. The conditions which typically prompted flight into the forests are captured in the following account.

Until March 1942, everything was quiet in the village of Hlybokae, Mogilev province . . . Many Red Army men, surrounded by the Germans in the summer of 1941, had settled down as if they were natives. In Hlybokae there were seven such men. When the collective was divided up, each was granted a plot. Some of them married into the local families . . . But in March the Germans ordered all former soldiers to appear at the mustering points. Soon the news spread that those who had heeded the order were sent into special camps where they were brutally treated, tortured by hunger, with mortality soon reaching horrifying proportions. No one went any more to the assembly points. Then the Germans began searching the villages, and wherever they discovered a soldier, they burned down the farmhouse and took away the cattle.

There was only one thing for the hunted men to do — take to the woods lest the whole village be made responsible for them. (Vakar, 1956: p. 194).

Whereas such bands of men formed initially to seek shelter during the occupation, in time they became active guerrilla formations.

As the number and size of the various guerrilla bands increased and as they became more of a nuisance to the occupation forces, the Nazis launched waves of large-scale and indiscriminate terror strikes in the countryside, in the vain hope of intimidating the partisans. General Keitel maintained that in the struggle to suppress guerrilla activities, "the troops have the right and the duty to use any means conducive to success — even against women and

children." (Dallin, 1957: p. 211). Whole areas of Belorussian countryside were leveled and their inhabitants exterminated. Vakar cites a report about one such campaign:

In the Briansk forests, between Kursk and Gomel, all the villages were burnt down. All we found were ashes and corpses. The remaining population lived in 'dug-holes.' This was the result of a major anti-guerrilla action in 1943. (Vakar, 1956: p. 198).

After the war, the destruction of one particular Belorussian village received great attention. A large monument there commemorates all Belorussian losses during the war. The village, Khatyn, and all of its inhabitants were destroyed in March of 1943. The SS contingent assigned to carry out the raid appeared one morning without any warning and caught the village by surprise. Most of the village's inhabitants were older people, women and children. All were dragged into a large shed. The shed's gates were nailed shut. Then the shed was set on fire and 149 villagers, including 76 children and infants, were burned to death.

There is reason to believe that during the German occupation of Belorussia, Soviet secret agents and provocateurs pursued a policy of engaging in actions whose military value was marginal but which were calculated to further stimulate the Nazis' fury against the population. The motive for such a policy was to make sure that even a population which hated and feared Soviet rule would welcome it as an alternative to brutality under the Nazis.

Persons who toured Belorussia at the close of the war reported that it had been turned into a wasteland. It is estimated that over 200 towns and 9,200 villages were destroyed during the three years of Nazi occupation. Official postwar estimates of human losses suggest that 2.3 million citizens, or one out of every four people in Belorussia, perished during the war and Nazi occupation. The most conservative estimate of the civilian casualties during the holocaust is 1.4 million (Lubachko, 1972: p. 157). This is in addition to a minimum of 250,000 Belorussian Jews (Dawidowicz, 1975: p. 544), who are estimated to have perished.

### Section 5: The Prisoners of War

One of the strangest stories of the Nazi holocaust concerns the plight of the Soviet prisoners of war. Among the long list of un-

fortunates who were victimized by the holocaust, the Soviet POWs were to suffer not only at the hands of their captors, the Nazis, but also at the hands of their own government after the war. For the Soviet government viewed the surviving POWs as pariahs.

The Nazis placed the Soviet POWs into a distinct category, even though as a group the POWs consisted of a wide variety of different peoples — Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Belorussians, etc. As usual, racial factors determined the character of the practices adopted by the Nazis toward the POWs. "While unforeseen conditions were a factor contributing to the neglect and mistreatment of the prisoners, the basic determinant of policy was the *Untermensch* philosophy." (Dallin, 1957: p. 140) Racial factors determined the segregation of POWs, whether for preferential or discriminatory treatment.

When reviewing the story of the Soviet POWs, the first item which captures attention is the extraordinary number of POW casualties. Whereas the total number of Soviet POWs is thought to have been somewhere between 5 and 6 million, it is estimated that about half of them perished during the war. This statistic is striking not only because of the huge number of individual deaths involved, but also because the proportion of deaths to prisoners is unparalleled. In stark contrast to the manner in which the English, American, French, and other western POWs in Nazi captivity were classified and treated, Soviet POWs were not officially recognized to be POWs at all and consequently were not treated in the manner which such status generally requires. The technical justification for this move on the part of the Nazis was the claim that the Soviet Union had never been a signatory to the 1929 Geneva accords governing the appropriate treatment of all captured soldiers. However, as can be deduced from wartime records, the Nazi position on Soviet POWs was more radical than that. A secret memo on the POW issue drafted in September of 1941 by a German critic of the reigning attitude, Admiral Canaris, (Ilnytskyj, 1955-58: vol. 2, pp. 346-7) reveals that, in the Nazi view, the service of the Soviet POWs in the Soviet military was not to be considered military service at all but rather participation in criminal activity. Hence, Soviet POWs were not segregated from civilian prisoners. The two populations were mixed in detention and concentration camps both in Ukraine and Belorussia, and in the huge camp complexes in Poland to which certain categories of POWs were transferred.

Thus, Soviet POWs suffered under the same racism which resulted in the extermination of millions of civilians in the Slavic countries of Poland, Ukraine and Belorussia. According to Hitler, the war in the East was not a conventional war but rather a war of extermination. The classic attitude of respect soldiers should hold for one another was abandoned in the East. It was to be a war of annihilation.

Many of the Soviet POWs died from starvation. It might be possible to maintain that food shortages made their starvation neither avoidable nor intentional. However, Hermann Goering is reported to have made the following remarks about "Russian" (Soviet) POWs to the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Ciano:

In the camp for Russian prisoners they have begun to eat each other. This year between twenty and thirty million persons will die of hunger in Russia. Perhaps it is well that it should be so, for certain nations must be decimated. (Kamenetsky, 1961: p. 152).

Further light is shed in a report composed by the Nazi minister for eastern affairs, Alfred Rosenberg:

According to the available evidence the population within the Soviet Union was quite willing to help out the prisoners of war with food.

In most cases the commanders of the camps forbade the civilian population to supply prisoners with food and preferred to expose them to starvation.

Also during the marches to the camps the civilian population was not allowed to hand any food to prisoners.

In many cases when prisoners could not continue marching either because of starvation or because of exhaustion, they were shot and their corpses were left behind in the sight of the dismayed population. (Kamenetsky, 1961: p. 153).

The starvation of the Soviet POWs was not, then, unintentional.

A majority of Soviet POWs were captured during the first six months of the war, between June and December, 1941. Four million were taken during that period. The Soviet Union had been

inadequately prepared for war and disorganization in the ranks was rapid. The German strategy of *Blitzkrieg* made it possible to encircle and isolate large enemy units. Although many units of the Red Army fought the invading Germans with fierce tenacity, others surrendered to the Germans without firing a shot. The Stalinist terror of the years preceding the war had demoralized and alienated many segments of the population. Many soldiers in the Red Army refused to fight for their government; they surrendered in the expectation that German rule would be an improvement.

The first official Nazi directive providing explicit instructions for the treatment of Soviet POWs was the notorious Commissar Decree which was drafted before the outbreak of the war in May of 1941. According to this decree, all political officials and leaders in the Red Army were to be liquidated either immediately or in transit facilities. They were not to be transferred to the rear of the invading armies. Once the war began, some German generals found the order to kill helpless captives inconsistent with their sense of military honor. These generals ignored it. Others carried it out.

Once the German invasion generated huge numbers of prisoners, however, pressures grew. Luckily for some, the huge numbers of prisoners brought one short period of respite very early in the campaign. For the first four months of the war, Belorussians, Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Rumanians, Finns and persons of German descent among the POWs were released outright.

This short-lived decision to release non-Russian prisoners whose homes were in territory already controlled by the Germans had two practical purposes: to relieve the army of at least some of the huge numbers of POWs in its custody, and to provide manpower for work in the occupied lands. But this decision was quickly reversed. Nazi civil authorities in both Belorussia and Ukraine strongly opposed the release of Belorussian and Ukrainian POWs. The Nazi commissar of Ukraine, Koch, reacted to the idea with outrage. By November of 1941, Hermann Goering decreed from Berlin that "Ukrainians enjoy no special treatment. The Führer has ordered that henceforth they are not to be released from captivity." (Dallin, 1957: p. 414). The same applied to Belorussians. Subsequently, the Nazi police began to rearrest ex-POWs.

Some Soviet POWs were executed within months after capture; others were shipped to the large concentration camps in Poland;

others perished in the small and medium-sized camps in Ukraine and Belorussia. German records indicate that 67,000 POWs were executed, although this figure is thought to be much too low. The German military, in part unwilling and in part unable — the front was moving too fast — did not carry out the Commissar Decree with thoroughness. However, once the front moved further on and the prisoners were gathered in camps, the SS efficiently set about to accomplish the task left unfinished by the military. During the summer and fall of 1941, the POWs were screened for political officers, intellectuals, Jews, and Asians (especially Moslems). These were liquidated. Asians were assigned to the lowest rung on the racial scale. Moslems were frequently mistaken by the SS for Jews because of their facial features and because they were circumcized; many were executed for allegedly being Jewish.

In the fall of 1941, the SS command requested that Soviet POWs be brought to Poland and Germany for "work." Large shipments of POWs were sent to Auschwitz and other complexes to be worked to death or liquidated outright. After the war, Madajczyk (1970: vol. 2, p. 350) estimated that in Poland alone some half-million Soviet POWs had perished.

In the many camps in Ukraine and Belorussia set up near the original points of capture, hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of POWs were starved to death during the winter of 1941-1942. A vivid portrait of conditions in one such camp near Kiev at Darnitsa can be found in *Babi Yar*.

It was an enormous mass of people: sitting, sleeping, wandering about and waiting for something. They were given nothing to eat.

Eventually they began to pull up the grass to get at the roots, and to drink the water from the puddles. In a few days there was no grass left and the camp was turned into a vast area of bare, trampled-down earth.

The nights were cold. Freezing, and steadily losing the appearance of human beings, the men huddled together in groups; one would rest his head on another's knees, and he in turn would rest his head on the next one, and so on, making a tightly packed group. In the morning, when the group began to move and gradually fall apart

there would always remain a few who had died during the night.

But then the Germans brought huge cauldrons and began cooking beetroot which they dug up just outside the camp. There were big collective-farm fields all around with beetroot and potatoes which had not been dug, and if anybody had been interested the prisoners could have had all they wanted to eat. But it was apparently part of the plan that the men should die off from hunger.

Each prisoner was entitled to have one ladle of beetroot water a day. Those who were weak from hunger were forced with sticks and shouts to get into the queue, and then they had to crawl to the cauldron on their hands and knees. This was arranged so as to 'control access to the food.' The officers, political instructors and Jews who were in the inner enclosure were given nothing. They had scratched over the whole of the ground and eaten what they could. By the fifth and sixth day they were chewing on their belts and boots. By the eighth or ninth day many of them were dying and the remainder were half-crazed with hunger. By the twelfth day there were only a very few left, quite out of their minds and their eyes clouded over, who nibbled and chewed on their nails, looked for lice in their clothes and stuffed them into their mouths. . . . It was frightful to see them die. (Anatoli, 1970: pp. 179-180).

Accounts of other camps report similar conditions. Many camps had no provision for shelter, only fenced-off areas without buildings in which to hide from the elements. In the "Cold Mountain" camp near Kharkiv, 90 to 100 men died daily. A total of 10,000 alone perished there.

Sickness spread through the camps. In some cases the Nazis helped speed death along, as in the camp in which the POWs were made to dig long ditches in which their legs were manacled. The ditches slowly filled with water and then froze over when the temperature dropped.

Individual Nazi camp commanders and police units tried to reduce the numbers of POWs by executing the injured and handicapped. Dallin reports that the head of one prisoner section sanc-

tioned the poisoning of any prisoner unable to work. In still other cases, the seriously injured were simply buried with the dead.

Beatings were commonplace. Prisoners were sometimes shot for not understanding an order shouted in German. In the camp at Rivne in the Volhyn region of Ukraine some of the more than 800 female POWs, most of whom were physicians in the Red Army, were subjected to rape.

The tragic ending to the story of what happened to those POWs who survived Nazi captivity is so bizarre that it bears at least brief mention here. At the conclusion of the war, Stalin ordered that all former Soviet POWs held by the Nazis be subjected to intense interrogation. Large numbers were sent to Siberia in order to serve sentences of considerable duration. The rationale was that any Soviet soldiers who had fallen into enemy hands were traitors, since Stalin's orders had been to fight to the death or to commit suicide. Many who had somehow managed to survive the Nazis then found themselves being shipped off to Soviet concentration camps.

### Section 6: The Slave Laborers

Toward the end of World War II there were about 7.5 million foreign workers toiling within Germany's borders. Most had been rounded up in their native lands and forcibly deported. The composition of this enormous work force was international, there were people from virtually every country in Europe. However, the majority were the Slavs of eastern and central Europe, the Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Russians and others. And it was these workers who were treated as slaves.

The idea of exploiting Slav labor developed naturally from the Nazi thesis that the Slavs' function on earth was to serve the needs of racially superior peoples. Most of the early plans for the occupation of the East envisioned the exploitation of local labor by waves of German colonists who were to settle in the newly acquired *Lebensraum*. It had not been expected that large numbers of Eastern undesirables would have to be brought to the Reich itself. However, the severe manpower shortages which ensued when the war dragged on led to the system of imported slave labor.

The deportation of Poles to Germany began early during the war and was in part an outgrowth of the Nazi plan to germanize those areas of western Poland which had been annexed to the Third

Reich. The plan was to uproot the Poles living in western Poland so that their places could be taken by German settlers. At first, mainly the able-bodied men were separated from their families and shipped westward to Germany for work. Later, as the war continued and requisitions for laborers increased, the net was cast farther eastward.

As the number of Polish workers in Germany increased, the Nazis felt it necessary to segregate them from the native population. SS Chief Himmler issued an order in September of 1940 decreeing that all Polish agricultural and industrial workers wear on their breasts an emblem containing the violet letter P outlined against a yellow background six centimeters square. Simultaneously, planes were used to scatter hundreds of thousands of anti-Polish leaflets throughout the German countryside. The leaflets asserted that Germans are superior people whose proper destiny it is to benefit from the physical labor of the Poles. Furthermore, the leaflet emphasized, it is improper for the Germans to engage in any social relations with the Poles. The leaflet warned, "No German may say that he knows a decent Pole. There are no decent Poles, just as there are no decent Jews." (Polish Ministry of Information, 1942: p. 427).

Six months after the P decree appeared, another directive codified practices already in effect; it was entitled "Treatment of Foreign Farm Workers of Polish Nationality," (March 6, 1941):

Farm workers of Polish nationality no longer have the right to complain and thus no complaints will be accepted by any official agency . . . The visit of churches is strictly prohibited . . . Visits to theaters, motion pictures or other cultural entertainment are strictly prohibited . . .

Sexual intercourse with women and girls is strictly prohibited. (Shirer, 1960: p. 950).

Poles were forbidden sexual intercourse even with Poles. Intercourse between a Pole and a German called for the imposition of the death penalty for the Pole. Accusations of sexual relations between Poles and Germans were then used as a terror tactic. For example, during the spring of 1941 Himmler ordered 190 Polish agricultural laborers to be hanged for allegedly having sexual intercourse with German women. The order emphasized racial purity. The men were indicted simply on the basis of accusations made by the Nazi police,

without any investigations ever being carried out. The Nazis chose the youngest Polish prisoners at the Buchenwald concentration camp and ordered them to administer the public hangings of the 190 workers.

Many workers tried to escape back to their homelands, and many succeeded. However, tens of thousands were caught and sent to concentration camps. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of Poles forcibly deported for labor, but Madajczyk (1970: vol. 1, p. 147) puts the figure at 1.5 million. In addition, some 400,000 Ukrainians were imported from western Ukraine.

When the supply of Poles and western Ukrainians was insufficient, the Nazis began importing the Ostarbeiter or "Eastern workers" from the conquered territories of the Soviet Union. The first order of the Ostarbeiter program in February 1942 demanded 380,000 workers for German agriculture and 247,000 for industry. Far greater numbers of laborers were needed. A special procuring office was set up in March 1942 to administer this effort under the Nazi official Fritz Sauckel. Before the war ended, a total of 2.8 million Ostarbeiter were shipped to Germany from the occupied Soviet Union. Slightly more than half were women.

The first trainloads of workers brought to the Reich from Ukraine, organized as early as January of 1942, consisted of volunteers. Ads and posters had been widely disseminated in the towns and cities promising glorious working conditions and generous pay if only people would volunteer to go to "beautiful and prosperous" Germany. Some saw an opportunity to flee the war zone and starvation. As news of the real state of affairs began to filter back from the first transports of workers, no one could be found to come forward voluntarily. Once in German custody, the volunteers became slaves. A letter written by an Ostarbeiter is cited in *Babi Yar*:

. . . Anyone who lagged behind or stopped or strayed off to one side was shot by the police. On the way to Kiev a man who had two children jumped out of the truck as the train was moving. The police stopped the train, caught the man and shot him in the back. We were even taken to the lavatory under escort and any attempt to escape meant being shot.

We remained in the bath-house until three in the afternoon. I couldn't stop shivering and towards the end I

nearly lost consciousness. Men and women had to go into the baths together. I was terribly embarrassed. The Germans would go up to naked girls, grab them by the breasts and hit them in improper places. Anyone who wished could walk in and make fun of us. We are slaves and anyone can do what he pleases with us. Of course, there's nothing to eat. And there's not the slightest hope of going back home. (Anatoli, 1970: p. 261).

Dropping all pretense, the Nazis soon turned to forced deportations.

These deportations began early in 1942 and ended in the summer of 1944. The Nazis posted notices like the following, originally posted in the Ukrainian region of Zaporizhia, reprinted in *Nimetsko-Fashystskyi Okupatsyinyi Reshym Na Ukraini*:

All men and women between the ages of 16 and 55 are ordered to report to the labor board immediately. Those who are employed on the date on which the notice is issued (9/24/43) on a full-time basis in the food industry or by the railway are exempted. Anyone who is not exempt in this way and who does not report for work will be executed.

Such orders failed to fill the large quotas demanded by Berlin. So then the Nazis resorted to kidnapping. Nazi units employed surprise to encircle unsuspecting groups in villages, in markets, or other public places and transport them to Germany. These indiscriminate sweeps are mentioned in a German report from 1942:

A veritable manhunt set in. Without regard for state of health or age, human beings were shipped to Germany like freight, and it became clear, once they had arrived, that more than 100,000 had to be sent home because of severe illness or other disabilities. (Dallin, 1957: p. 444).

The raids produced great anguish among those seized and those left behind. Dallin cites two different accounts:

The population reacts particularly strongly against the forcible separation of mothers from their babies, and

of school children from their families. Those affected by the draft seek to evade being shipped to Germany by any means. . . . This in turn leads to an intensification of German counter-measures: among others, confiscation of grain and property; burning down of houses; forcible concentration; tying down and mishandling of those assembled; forcible abortion of pregnant women.

. . . scenes of beating and chicanery of those leaving for Germany and their relatives are taking place almost daily before the eyes of the population of Kiev. Relatives of . . . departing workers were not allowed to hand them food and clothes, the crying women being ruthlessly pushed into the muddy streets with rifle butts. (Dallin, 1957: p. 435).

Where the terrain permitted, men fled into the surrounding forests. When the Nazi manhunts were intensifying in their vicinity, women would at times injure themselves intentionally in the hope of being rejected by a raiding party. To counteract the disappearances of people who were to be deported, the Nazis would take retribution upon the families of those missing.

The Ostarbeiter were transported to Germany as though they were cattle, packed into freight cars, unfed and abused. Once in Germany, the workers were treated as an underclass. Their help was needed everywhere, so they had to be dispersed throughout the population. Their exploitation was institutionalized in rules and regulations described by a German officer:

Limitations on the right to leave the camp, on wage rates, social services, and rations were even worse than for the Poles. It was said that the Ost population had always been inured to getting along on little. Punishment by whipping was more or less officially sanctioned. All sexual intercourse with German women was punished by death — either by summary court proceedings or else as a police measure. . . . On top of this, there came other measures considered as pure chicanery, such as limitations in the use of means of public transportation, intended to prevent all contact of the German population with the Ostarbeiter. (Dallin, 1957: p. 436).

In addition to the use of public transport being forbidden them, they were not allowed access to movie houses or other public places. Also, Ukrainian girls used as domestic servants were frequently not allowed to eat at the same table with Germans or to be alone with German children. As the most forceful proponents of Nazi racism, the SS maintained close surveillance over the laborers from the East. They threatened concentration camp sentences and death — and meted out both often. At the end of 1942, the SS gained the right to dispose of Ostarbeiter problems without any recourse to any set of laws or any other authority. The workers were subject to the caprice of individual SS officials.

Along with all Jews, all inmates of Nazi concentration camps and the Polish workers brought from the incorporated territories, the Ostarbeiter were forced to wear a clearly visible identifying emblem on each garment. The emblem consisted of an embroidered square which bore the inscription "Ost." The Nazis wished to keep strict track of the "subhumans" in their midst. They wished to emphasize publicly their inferior status. They wished to create a circle of fear and alarm.

Among the total 2.8 million Ostarbeiter brought to Germany, a little over 2 million were Ukrainian, some 380,000 were Belorussian and the rest were Russians, Tartars, Kirghiz and others. The Nazi commissar in Ukraine, Koch, went to great lengths in order to satisfy Berlin's quotas. The Ostarbeiter did not suffer as much as did the victims of the concentration camps. But the sufferings of the slavery they did endure were not few. Their circle of hell originated in the same maelstrom as the others.

## EPILOGUE

Outrage is the initial response to evidence of mass bestiality. Extended exposure then gradually bludgeons the mind until it becomes limp in stunned silence. After the helplessness of shock follows a long period of painful reflection; and, slowly, acceptance of the fact that one must come to terms with reality. The fragile trappings of civilized behavior are far more vulnerable to violent and evil forces than we are usually able to imagine. Yet we must so imagine, in the hope that the likelihood of recurrence can be reduced.

When grappling with the Nazi holocaust, quandries arise: Where does one begin in attempting to comprehend how some human beings could have been capable of subjecting their fellows to such pain, anguish and degradation that the living were made to envy the dead? How others were capable of barricading terrified women and children in wooden buildings to be burned alive? How still others could practice crippling medical experimentation upon young women as though they were mice? One cannot even begin to understand how or why any of this was possible without first recognizing the central role played in this madness by the dynamics of dehumanization, of which anti-Semitism is one instance and the racism which determined the plight of the Gypsies and Slavs in the Nazi circles of hell another.

Dehumanization expels some category of people from the family of man. The minimal rights of a human being include the right not to be treated like an animal or like an inanimate object to be destroyed as others see fit. In the pronouncements of the Nazis, Jews and Gypsies and Slavs were explicitly described as "subhumans." Codes of behavior normally applicable to fellow humans, i.e., Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, were deemed inappropriate. As a result, social and psychological inhibitions which normally operate to restrain men's savage impulses were unleashed and millions of Jewish, Gypsy and Slavic innocents were victimized.

Dehumanization may appear to be at the extreme end of a scale which also includes prejudice and racism. Though there is some insight here, this appearance is dangerously misleading. For prejudice and racism are in fact the psychological cornerstone of

dehumanization. That this must be so becomes clear when we reflect upon how incredible the Nazi holocaust appears to be. It is difficult to imagine how gas chambers, bloodstained ravines and the incineration of live humans came to seem perfectly acceptable. Such major shifts in what is acceptable do not occur in a total vacuum. They grow out of persuasion founded upon more familiar and commonplace social attitudes: prejudice and racism.

One of the effects of prejudice directed at whole categories of people is that it robs these people of some of their humanity. Made stereotypes of evil, stupidity and social disease, the victims are forced to travel the first leg of the journey to subhuman status. Made a depository of inferior or socially pathological traits, they receive a rude shove down the slippery slope to total dehumanization.

It is important to emphasize that prejudice and racism help to make mass brutalization possible, for it is easy — under normal historical circumstances — to acquire a false sense of security. The possibility of mass atrocities appears to be so remote that we are unlikely to pay serious enough attention to the budding of poisonous attitudes. However, given a sudden and traumatic shift in social conditions, dehumanization can easily develop its own deadly momentum if the ground for it is fertile.

In this brief account I have not been able to treat every aspect of the holocaust; it was necessary to concentrate on the main lines of an untold story. The story on which I have concentrated is that of the 9 to 10 million Slavic and Gypsy victims who perished along with the 6 million Jews — yet even the stories of these 15-16 million do not exhaust the full range of the entire bloody epic of Nazi horror.

One important aspect of the Nazi holocaust which cries out for detailed and honest inquiry concerns collaboration. It is regrettably and tragically true that there were collaborators with the Nazis. Unfortunately, reckless charges are sometimes made against entire groups, many of whom were primarily victims, not victimizers. A recent though by no means isolated example bears recounting. In a prominently displayed book review published in 1979 in the *New York Times*,\* the novelist John Gardner addressed the issue of

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\* Rev. of *Sophie's Choice*, by William Styron, *The New York Times Book Review*, 27 May 1979, p. 1.

Nazi-Polish relations during the Second World War and described at length the position of the Poles as partners rather than victims of the Nazis during the holocaust. A subsequent apology and retraction by the reviewer, who admitted ignorance about events from not that distant a past, do not diminish one's astonishment and sorrow. The Polish victims of the Nazi holocaust were once again victimized, even in death.

Part of the reason such grotesque distortions and misconceptions have been possible lies in the odd silence that has settled over the suffering of the Slavs and Gypsies under Hitler's Third Reich. The volumes of scholarship in English devoted primarily or extensively to studying the Nazi holocaust as it bore upon the Gypsies, Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Russians and others are few. Autobiographical accounts, diaries and the like are even fewer in number. Why? Have Slavs and Gypsies written so relatively little about this bloody episode in their histories because of the loss of their literary elites? Because of the lack of those urban, highly educated, and articulate cadres needed to give rich, formal, and literary expression to collective experience? Are Slavs and Gypsies more prone to respond to suffering with a kind of stoic and silent resignation, among whose products is a reluctance to relive painful and frightful experiences? I do not know. Nor do I know why non-Slavic and non-Gypsy writers and scholars have expressed so little interest in the subject.

As a young boy, I once noticed a five digit number tattooed on my uncle's arm. Having no inkling that he had acquired it in Auschwitz, much less what Auschwitz was, I remember being perplexed. My uncle, a quiet, respectable family man bore a mark I had associated with sailors and motorcycle gang members.

Later, I learned that when his fellow workers in an auto factory in Detroit asked him about the tattoo, my uncle would deflect their inquiries. When pressed, he would only say that the number was his lucky number which he had inked onto his arm. He lacked the energy, patience or imagination to begin explaining about the inferno he had been made to traverse in his younger years. He would not — could not — speak of it.

As I grew older I learned that the parents of two of my school friends had also been incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps. Neither they nor my uncle ever had the opportunity nor the inclina-

tion to write about their experiences as "subhumans" in the Nazi empire. Theirs is a story involving many millions of people which is yet to be told in full. The intent of this brief account is to stimulate others to add to it, until a flood of memory is unloosed and the silence ended. The victims must not continue to be victimized.

Almost all accounts of the victims of the Nazi holocaust, including the present, have been organized around the topic of the experiences of specific ethnic groups. This is understandable. For example, the incredible experience of the Jews demanded special detailing in order that the full horror of their particular condition — as the most hunted, isolated and defenseless victims prey to the most savage and intense destructive impulses exercised by the Nazis — be documented accurately. Furthermore, treatment by ethnic groups is an inevitable product of the character of the event itself, given the dominant role of racial differentiation in it. Thus, because the Nazi inferno was organized on the basis of racial and ethnic distinctions, it is natural that accounts of it convey the stories of the victims according to their belonging to individual ethnic categories.

Yet the standard approach to the treatment of the holocaust can sometimes also have drawbacks. For example, it can so rivet attention to the particular that it may obscure the vital universalist lesson to be drawn from the catastrophe that was the Nazi holocaust — a lesson the learning of which is the only real justification for continuing to dwell on that event. Namely, we must be our brothers' keepers. Therefore, anti-Semitism cannot be left to become of concern solely to Jews. The contempt, but thinly disguised in ethnic jokes and barbs, directed at times toward Poles, or, in the far West in Canada toward Ukrainians, cannot be left to become the concern solely of Poles and Ukrainians respectively. Nor can bigotry directed against Gypsies be left to become solely a concern of Gypsies. And so on.

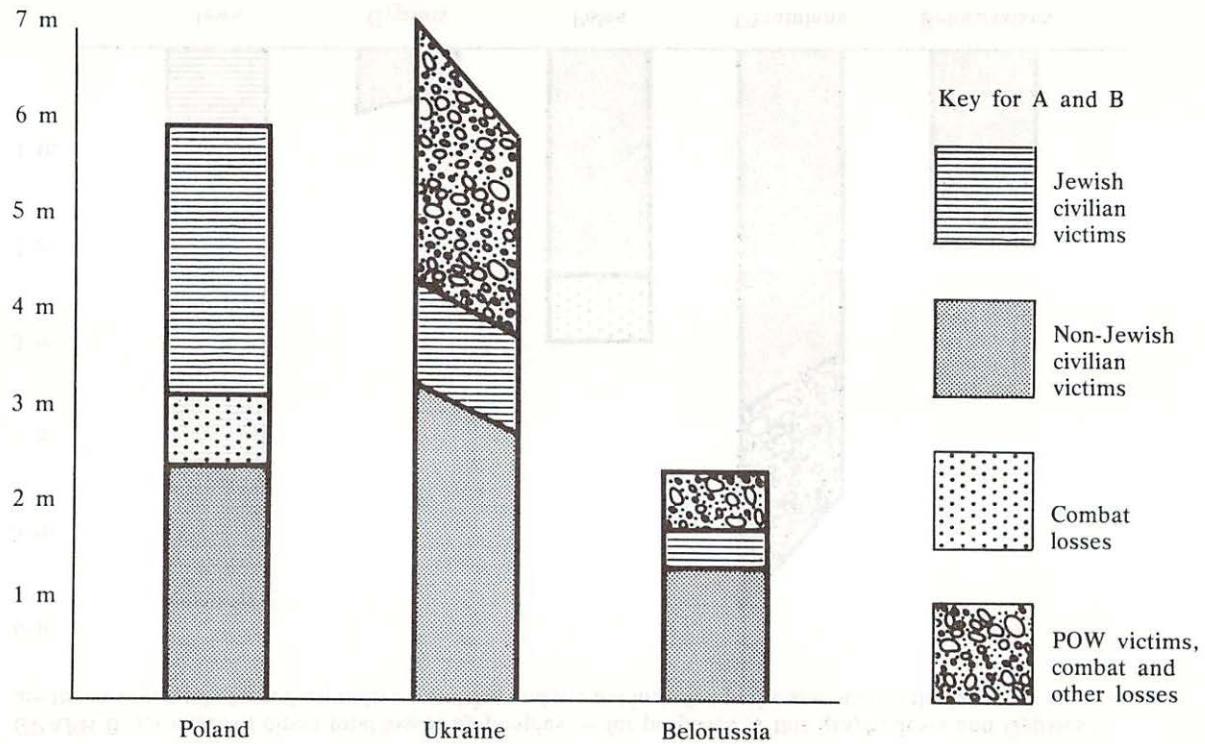
If the holocaust teaches anything, it teaches that we must join hands in moral undertaking. If we do not rise high enough to love one another, then we must at least come together in a refusal to tolerate contempt, hatred and loathing, and prejudice and racism of any kind. The victims of the Nazi holocaust cry out to us to make a shared commitment to work towards extinguishing all seeds of irrational animosity. Their sacrifice demands it.

## APPENDIX

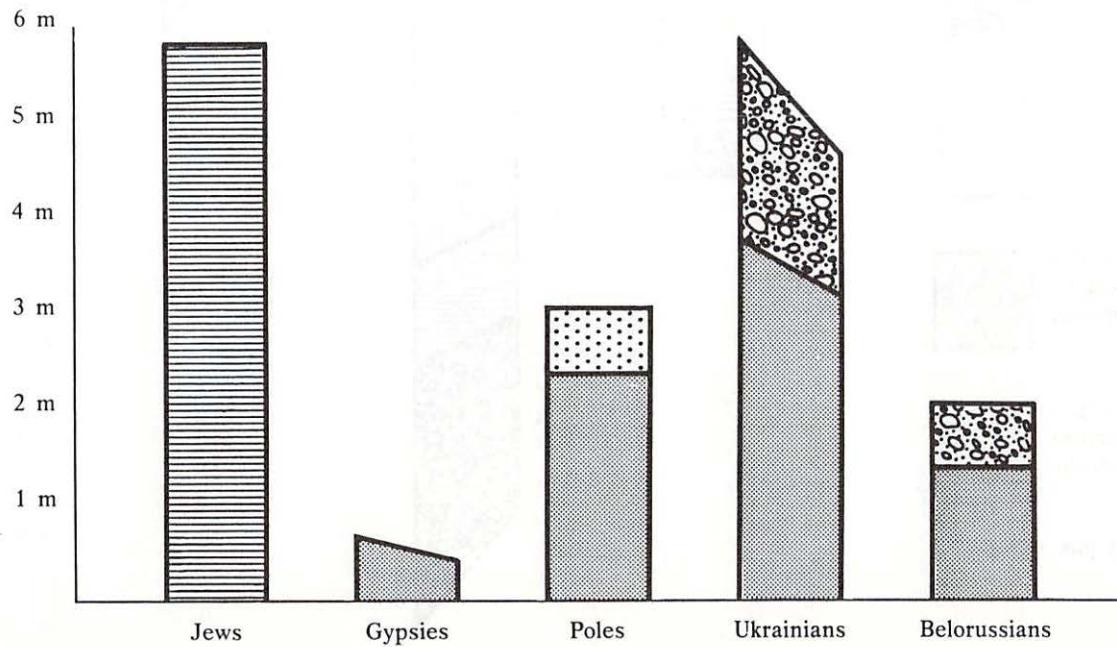
### GLOSSARY

<u>term(s)</u>	<u>explanation</u>
Drang nach Osten	“Push to the East”; the slogan used to represent Germany’s expansionist ambitions toward Eastern Europe.
Einsatzgruppen	“Action teams”; special Nazi task forces assembled for exterminating undesirables.
Lebensraum	“Living space”; the concept used to express the rationale for Nazi imperialism; i.e., <i>Lebensraum</i> was the object of <i>Drang nach Osten</i> .
Ostarbeiter	“Eastern workers”; the name applied to the slave laborers taken from Ukraine, Belarusia and Russia.
Untermensch	“Subhuman”; name applied by the Nazis to virtually all of the undesirable peoples at one time or another, but most often used in reference to the Slavs living in the Soviet Union.
Volksdeutsche	Ethnic Germans living outside of Germany proper or Austria.

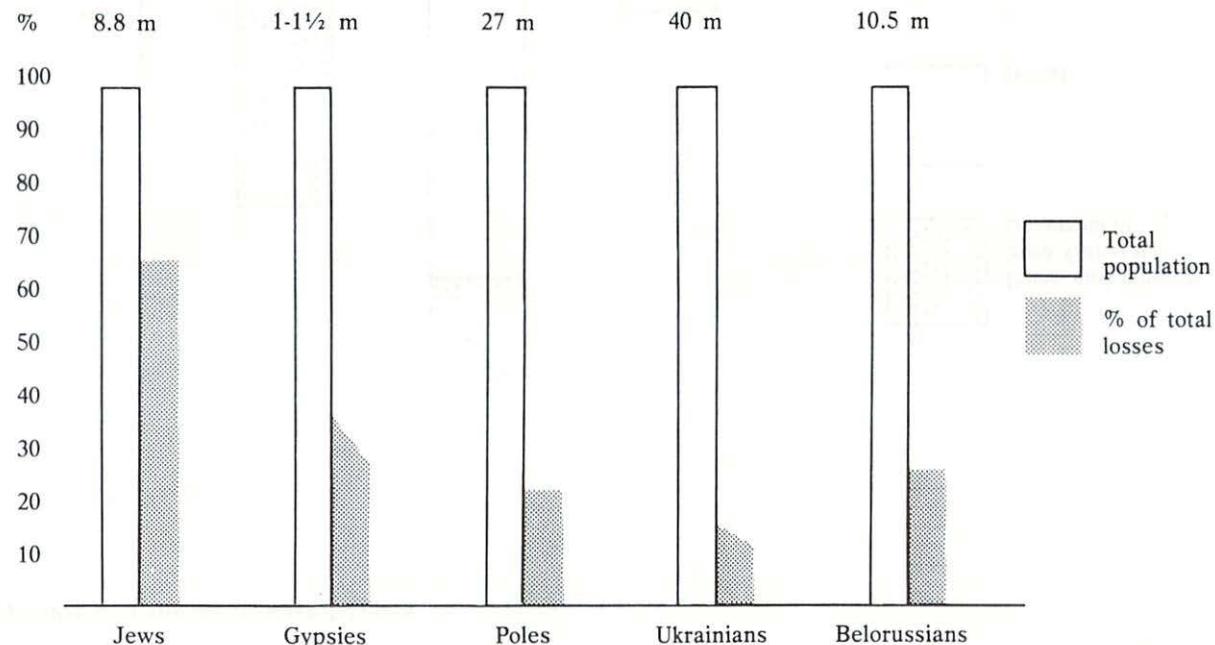
GRAPH A: Estimate of direct total losses by countries in millions.



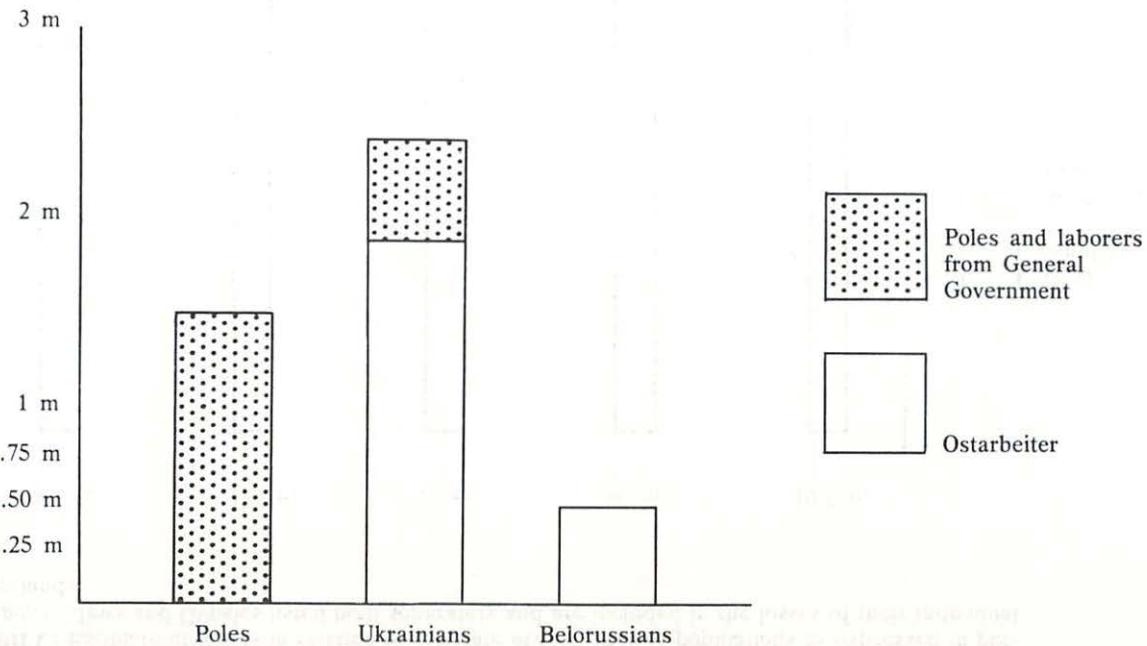
**GRAPH B:** Estimate of direct total losses by peoples — for purposes of this graph, Jews and Gypsies are listed separately from their native countries and are not included in the statistics of the latter.



**GRAPH C:** Estimate of losses in relation to estimate of total prewar populations as expressed in percentages — Jews and Gypsies listed both separately and are included in the losses of their individual native lands.



GRAPH D: Estimate of slave laborers



### Summary of Statistical Estimates

Graphs A to D represent a summary of the statistical estimates referred to throughout this narrative. There is much more consensus regarding some estimates than others. Where there is substantial uncertainty as to the numbers involved, as concerns the question of total Ukrainian losses and the questions of Gypsy losses and the size of the Gypsy prewar population, the range of uncertainty is incorporated into the graphs.

Whereas it is evident in graphs A and B that many peoples suffered great losses in absolute numbers at the hands of the Nazis, graph B and even more clearly graph C capture the extent of extraordinary devastation experienced by European Jewry during the holocaust. At the same time, when adding the statistics on all, for example, of the Poles or Ukrainians who suffered under the Nazis, i.e., the civilian victims, the POW victims and the slave laborers, it becomes obvious why the Slavs and Gypsies were scarred so deeply too.

The statistical estimates referred to here were derived from a variety of sources. Figures pertaining to the Gypsies were found in Kenrick and Puxon, Kenny and Yoors. Estimates on Polish victims and slave laborers were found in Madajczyk, who in turn cites the official report of the Polish Bureau of War Restitutions. Statistical estimates concerning Ukrainian losses were found in *Ukrains'ka RSR* and Prociuk; those regarding Ukrainian slave laborers were found in Dallin and Madajczyk.

Valuhin and Lubachko were the sources for statistical estimates of Belorussian losses and numbers of slave laborers deported. All figures pertaining to Soviet POW losses were cited from Dallin. Lastly, all figures regarding Jewish losses, both totals and estimates by individual country, were cited from Dawidowicz.

\* \* \*

The values used in making up the graphs are the following: (1) Gypsies — prewar population, 1-1 $\frac{1}{4}$  million; losses, .25 to .6 million; (2) Poles — prewar population (including Jews), 27 million; total losses, 6 million (of this 600,000 were combat casualties; of the

total, 3 million were Jews and 3 million were Gentiles); slave laborers, 1.5 million; (3) Ukrainians — prewar total population, 40 million; total losses between 5.5 and 6.7 million (of this, .9 million were Jews and a minimum of 3 million were Ukrainian civilians); slave laborers, 2 million Ostarbeiter (those taken from the occupation zone Ukraine) and .4 million from the General Government (from western Ukraine); (4) Belorussians — total prewar population, 10.5 million; total losses, 2.25 million (including 245,000 Jews and 1.4 Belorussian civilians); slave laborers (Ostarbeiter) 380,000; (5) Jews — total prewar European population 8.8 million; losses 5.9 million; (6) Soviet POWs — total captured 5.16 to 5.75 million or more; 2.5 to 3 million killed.

### Notes on the Bibliography

Though each of the books listed in the bibliography sheds light on one or another aspect of the effect of the Nazi holocaust on the Slavs and Gypsies, there are nevertheless several books which are particularly valuable as starting points for anyone wishing to pursue further acquaintance with the subject matter.

The single indispensable source on the victimization of Gypsies is Kenrick and Puxon's excellent investigation entitled *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*; an interesting and informative autobiographical narrative which bears on the topic is Yoors's *Crossings*.

There exists no comprehensive study in English of the Nazis' victimization of the Poles. The principal sources are Madajczyk's books in Polish. Gross's book, a sociological rather than historical work, does not treat developments in those areas of Poland incorporated directly into the Reich; it is nevertheless informative because it contains in an English language publication some of the data developed by Madajczyk and other Polish scholars working on the holocaust since the war. The Polish Ministry of Information's *Black Book of Poland* and the *Polish White Book* are also valuable sources because they contain important data, pictures and reprints of documents and other materials of significance. Their drawback is that, since they were published in 1942, they only include information on the first period of Nazi occupation. Their special merit derives from their devoting considerable attention to the Nazi treatment of Poles in the Polish lands annexed outright to Germany, something which Gross does not touch upon.

The greatest amount of information gathered on the Nazis' treatment of Ukrainians, Belorussians, Soviet POWs and Ostarbeiter is to be found in Dallin's classic study, *German Rule in Russia*. Acquaintance with it is indispensable to anyone wishing to learn more about virtually any aspect of the Nazis' attitudes, politics and performance in the East. Also helpful are Kamenetsky's *Hitler's Occupation of Ukraine*, Vakar's *Belorussia*, and Lubachko's *Belorussia Under Soviet Rule, 1917-1957*. Anatoli's (Kuznetsov's) *Babi Yar* is a gold mine of insight and information about life in the occupation zone Ukraine under the Nazis. However, it is essential to read the second, revised edition of *Babi Yar* which was published after the author defected from the Soviet Union, for the second version (published in 1970) is uncensored and also relieved from the tendentiousness present in the first, which was published from an edition which appeared while Kuznetsov was still in the USSR.

Two accounts of concentration camp existence available in English and written by Auschwitz survivors, one a Pole and the other a Ukrainian, are Borowski's *This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* and Mirchuk's *In the German Mills of Death*. The first is written as fiction and the second in the form of memoirs.

For anyone not familiar with the more scholarly literature on the holocaust as suffered by the Jews, Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews* is highly recommended as an analysis of the sources, nature and development of Nazi and German anti-Semitism, and Hillberg's *The Destruction of European Jews* is similarly recommended as an excellent comprehensive account of the holocaust itself.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Bohdan Wytywycky holds a B.A. With Distinction from Wayne State in English and philosophy, and M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in philosophy from Columbia. He has taught at Columbia, The New York Institute of Technology and the Hastings Center, and he has been invited to deliver one of the 1980 William Kurelek Memorial Lectures at the University of Toronto. This is his first publication.

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"Bohdan Wytywycky has written a most interesting and in many senses pioneering study of the fate of the many victims of Nazi oppression. Despite some philosophical and methodological reservations, one cannot fail to be impressed by the seriousness of its tone, the power of its central image of the many circles of hell, and the importance of his undertaking. Wytywycky has shared with the general reader in the English-speaking world, additional dimensions of Nazi oppression and its impact upon the many cultures and the many peoples of Eastern Europe. He has also raised anew in a serious and somber way the question of the universality of the Holocaust and the centrality of the Jewish experience under Nazism. I would like to have seen his keen intellect probe the critical and unavoidable question of the collaboration with the Nazis of the other victims of their oppression in murdering Jews, sharing with their enemy the most central goal — the extermination of the Jewish people. But this must await some future work by Wytywycky and others. With *The Other Holocaust*, Wytywycky has begun a critically important task."

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